Blitzed
THE STARS ARE ALIGNED

THOMAS DOLBY

"MY FIRST SYNTH WAS A BROKEN CIRCUIT BOARD OUT OF A DUMPSTER"

+

TONY HADLEY

"WE BECAME THE HOUSE BAND AT THE BLITZ CLUB IN ABOUT 1978-79"

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW

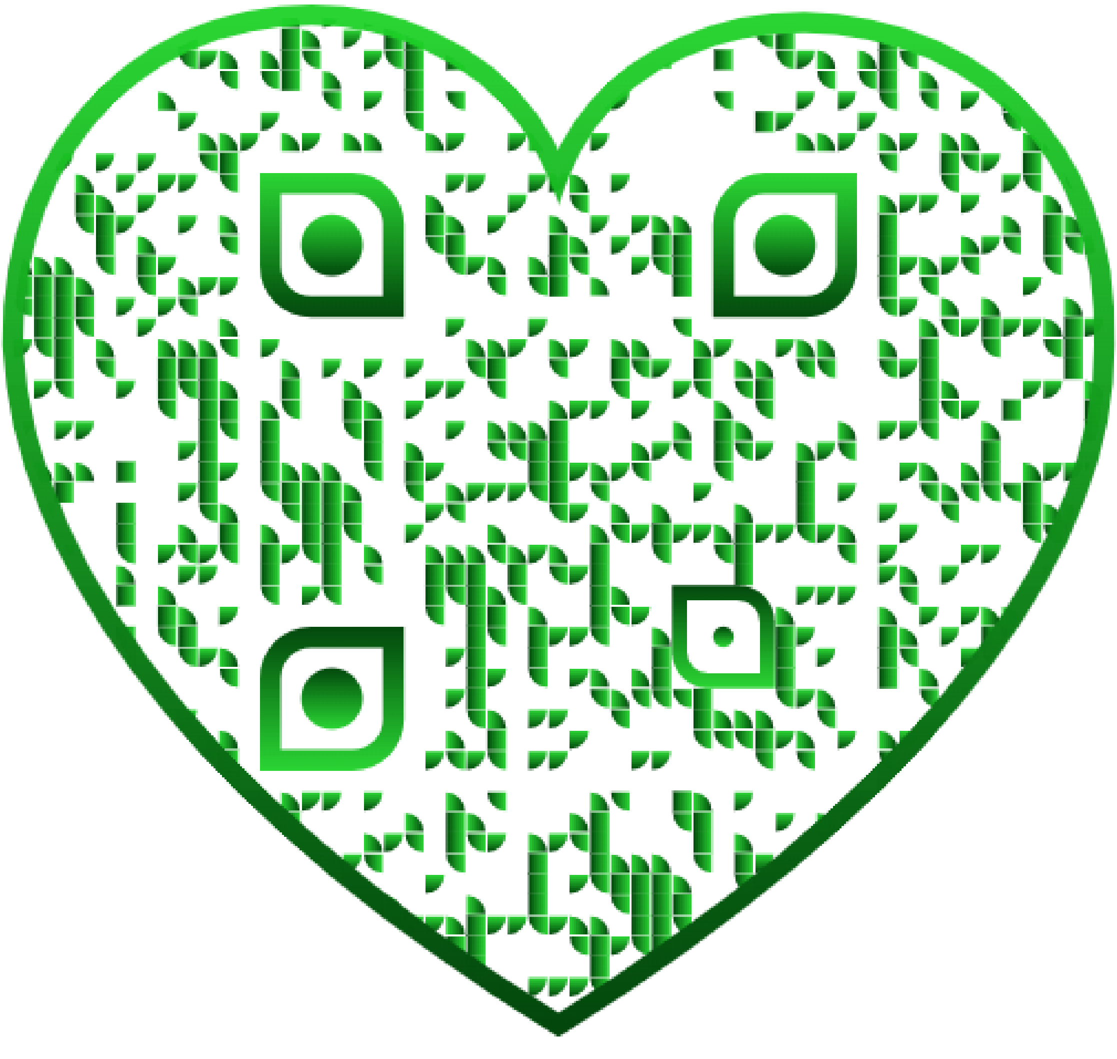
MIDGE URE

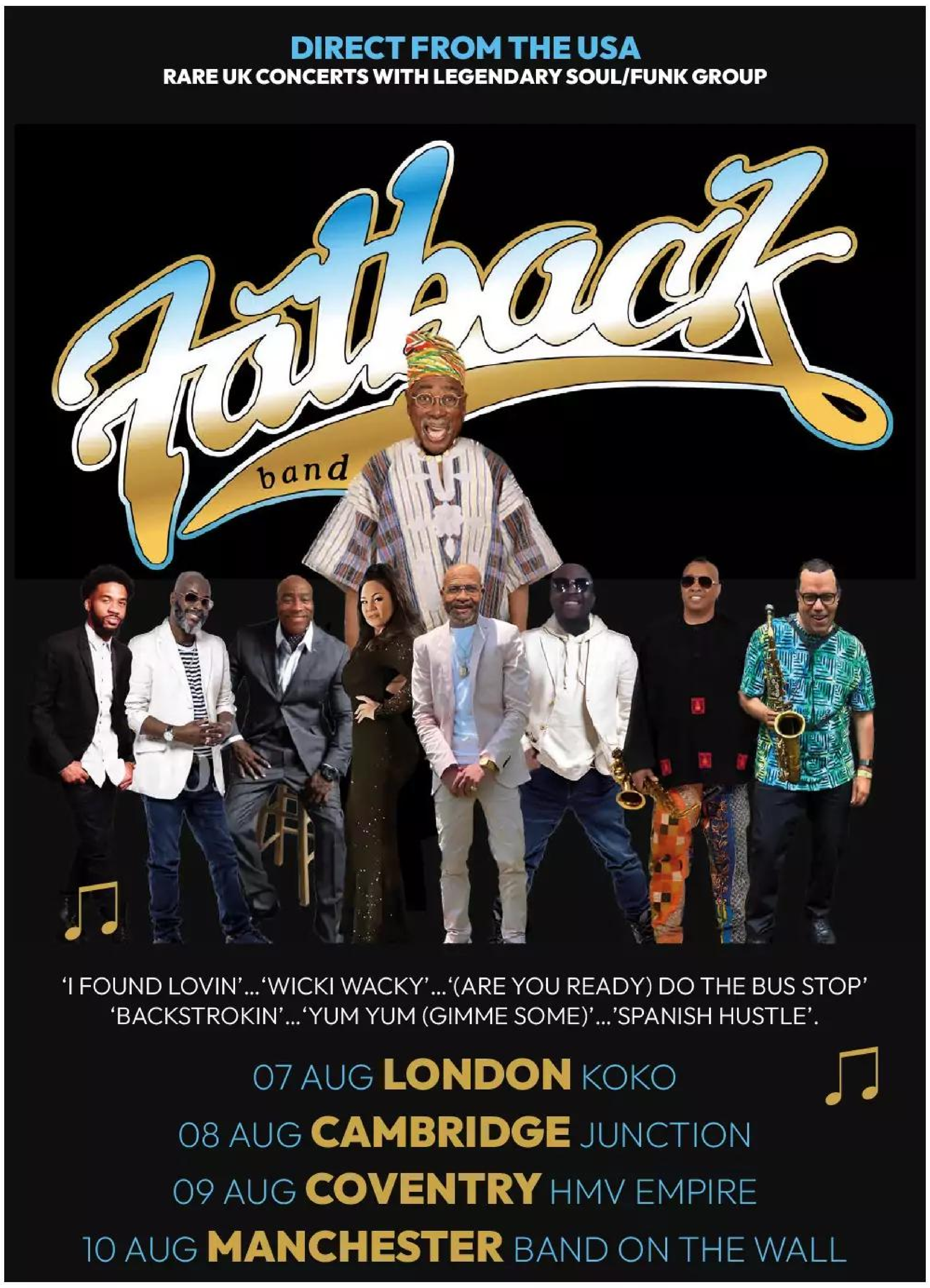
DOUBLE FEATURE ON HIS MUSIC AND HIS PERSPECTIVE ON BAND AID AND LIVE AID

PLUS

ANDY BELL, **BLANCMANGE**, BLUTENGEL, **CLAUDIA BRÜCKEN**, HOLLY JOHNSON, **INERTIA**, STEPHEN LIPSON, **KMFDM**, LIFE AFTER LIVE AID, **MARK REEDER**, MARK SHAW, **MARTIN FRY**, MEN WITHOUT HATS, **MIDGE URE**, OMD, **PiL**, ROBIN SCOTT, **SPARKS**, THE BIRTHDAY MASSACRE, **THE MOOD**, THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES, **TUBEWAY DAYS**, VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE, **WOLFGANG FLÜR AND PETER DUGGAL**

ISSUE 21 // £6.99





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WED	22	OCT 2025	CAMBRIDGE	JUNCTION
THU	23	OCT 2025	SOUTHAMPTON	THE 1865
FRI	24	OCT 2025	SHOREHAM-BY-SEA	THE ROPETACKLE *
SAT	25	OCT 2025	LONDON	229
SUN	26	OCT 2025	NORWICH	THE ADRIAN FLUX WATERFRONT
WED	29	OCT 2025	BRISTOL	THE FLEECE
THU	30	OCT 2025	LIVERPOOL	THE CAVERN
FRI	31	OCT 2025	BIRMINGHAM	THE CROSSING
SAT	01	NOV 2025	SHEFFIELD	THE LEADMILL
SUN	02	NOV 2025	NOTTINGHAM	METRONOME
TUE	04	NOV 2025	NEWCASTLE	THE CLUNY
WED	05	NOV 2025	CARLISLE	THE BRICKYARD *
THU	06	NOV 2025	EDINBURGH	THE CAVES
FRI	07	NOV 2025	GLASGOW	SAINT LUKES
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Front Cover Image: Brian Griffin Courtesy of MMX Gallery

MEET THE TEAM

Kurt Sinclair-Hall - Editor
Musician with The Rude Awakening, remixer, producer of live events, media and radio. Father of two amazing girls and lifelong West Ham supporter. He recovered from a series of critical illnesses in 2014 relating to Swine Flu, a factory-reset moment which reshaped his thinking and life going forward. Kurt's alter-ego Johnny Normal has opened shows for Adam Ant, Blancmange, Altered Images, Wolfgang Flür.

Bridget Gray - Editor
Lover of 80s music, pop culture and all things Synthpop, Bridget is an experienced Business Consultant with an incredibly organised mind, a talented singer, writer and musician with The Rude Awakening, and obsessive about Sci-fi including Star Trek, Doctor Who and classic movies about fighting aliens and AI taking over the planet. Her favourite Womble is Orinoco.

Mik Scarlet
A broadcaster, journalist, musician and DJ, and is probably best known for being one of the first wheelchair users to gain a celebrity status on our TV screens. He's been a regular face in the UK media for 30 years, writing for newspapers, fashion and music magazines, and has written sleeve notes for numerous compilations.

Paul Browne
A music enthusiast interested in a broad spectrum of music genres. He is the founder of the original OMD Website, while also providing design concepts and writing sleeve notes for various OMD reissues. Paul founded The Electricity Club, a dedicated blog focussed on exploring electronic music.

Imogen Bebb
Musician, author and journalist who writes regularly for magazines including Blitzed and Electronic Sound. Her first book was about Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark and was published in 2022. She is currently studying for a Master's degree in Musicology at the University of Cambridge.

Richard Evans
Richard Evans has worked in the music industry for over 30 years and has worked for Andy Bell, Vince Clarke and Erasure since 2009. In 2022 he published the book Listening to the Music the Machines Make. Richard is currently working on a new book for publication sometime in 2026.

Martin James
An academic, professor, and curator of a long-running multi-venue music festival. He has been a music journalist for over thirty years, having trawled the darkened recesses of the world's dingiest clubs in search of the perfect beat. He discovered his love for club life doing the merry dance from Billy's to Blitz.

Marc Massive
Vocalist with Massive Ego since 1996, signed to Out Of Line Music. Marc did work experience at Smash Hits, danced for Boy George, modelled in the 90s, was part of the Romo scene, looked like a geisha Mickey Mouse, DJ'd, ran clubs, co-curated Act Art events, is a vegan animal rights activist and appeared in a Duran Duran video.

Jan Blackwell
Loves music, live gigs and has a passion for photography. She is a proud volunteer board member for a music charity in her home town of Sheffield, The Sarah Nulty Power of Music Foundation. She also photographs for a theatre company.

Darren D. Danahy
D.D.Danahy (Darren Douglas Danahy) grew up the youngest of nine siblings, all huge music fans and half of which are musicians. This set the stage for a lifelong obsession with music and everything connected to it. Apart from writing about music, Darren also records and performs with a number of bands in different musical genres.

Mike Palin
Mike is passionate about music, and is a big fan of Empathy Test and plenty more. He prefers the smaller gigs to arenas. Mike will give virtually any music a listen, and loves stumbling across new bands/music. He would ideally like to pick five bands and organise a gig! Never say never, Mike!

Steven Swaby
Much like Sister Sledge, Steven has been lost in music since 1979. Slavishly devoted to all things post-punk, synthpop and new wave, he spends a senseless amount of time hoarding, listening to and thinking about music. Once accidentally trod on Damon Albarn's foot (sorry, Damon). Also works internationally as a writer/curator for cultural attractions, exhibitions and heritage sites.

Simon Heavisides
After his attempt at indie pop stardom, Simon took up writing about music instead. Graduating from his own fanzine Simon has written for a range of websites and magazines including The Line of Best Fit, The Quietus, Fadeawayradiate and many others. His biography of Adrian Borland of the Sound was published last year.

Contributors & Thanks
Thanks to our team of writers and contributors including Mark Buckley, Electronic Café, Stuart Calder, Eoghan Lyng and Jay Smith.

Thanks also to Mollie Broad, Dylan Burkhardt, Sam Giannini, Ken Harrison, Stefan Herwig, Stuart Kirkham, William Larnach-Jones, Chris Latham, Gary Levermore, Steve Malins, Kara McCabe, Zoe Miller, Lunesse Moon, Kevin Pocklington, Magda Shackleton, Erika Tooker, Cory White and Andy Woods.

WELCOME

Firstly, we want to thank our lovely readers for your incredible continued support and appreciation shown for Blitzed Magazine. Your feedback is always helpful, and we are blown away by the positivity around the magazine on social media.

Issue 20, with the lovely Hazel O'Connor on the cover, proved to be very popular, and so many of you came forward with messages of support for Hazel following our exclusive interview in France. Issue 21 is also full of amazing features... We look at Life After Live Aid, where Steven Swaby explores the reality behind the scenes of the most high-profile fundraising initiatives ever, and some of the personalities involved (and not). This leads to a double feature on Midge Ure where he talks about his personal viewpoint on Band Aid and Live Aid, and also a candid interview about the milestones in his music career. Thomas Dolby chats about his obsession with technology and music, Claudia Brücken tells us all about her new album, Martin Fry talks about the ABC orchestral Lexicon of Love Tour, and Ivan from Men Without Hats discusses their latest tour. Mark Reeder continues his adventures in Berlin, and we have interviews with Erik Stein from Cult With No Name, Robin Scott (M), Inertia, celebrated producer Stephen Lipson and Mark Shaw from Then Jerico. Tracey Beehive talks about the re-release of a Voice of The Beehive classic album and we chat to Mark Fordyce from The Mood. We have Chibi from The Birthday Massacre, Chris Pohl from Blutengel, Alex from The Northern Territories and our 'We've Got You Covered' features are about Birmingham electronic covers band SYNTH, as frontman Ian Wall discusses his experience of writing original music and also performing the songs of others, and Gary Numan tribute act Tubeway Days is reviewed.

There is also news of a forthcoming Blitzed Magazine Music Chart, more incredible giveaways and details of our first Blitzed regional live music event in Birmingham.

Hold on to your hat!

Kurt and Bridget
Editors
editor@blitzedmag.com

Alcohol
Blitzed
EDITOR
Blitzed

Blitzed Editors with Ian Wall of SYNTH

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Publisher
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Independence
Blitzed is published by Silverback Publishing Ltd

Distribution
Trouble finding Blitzed? Call +44 7841 412199 or email subs@silverbackpublishing.rocks.

Blitzed magazine (Print) ISSN 2752-972X /
Blitzed magazine (Digital) ISSN 2752-9738

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Ricardo

BlitzedBITZ

UNOFFICIAL DEPECHE MODE FAN PARTY on July 19, 2025, at The Water Rats in London! Get ready to dance the night away to your favourite Depeche Mode and Mute Records hits with fellow fans. IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WATER RATS.
https//www.facebook.com/TheWaterRatsVenue
ONLY £6 ENTRY IN ADVANCE, or more on the door, and £5 for students with I.D.
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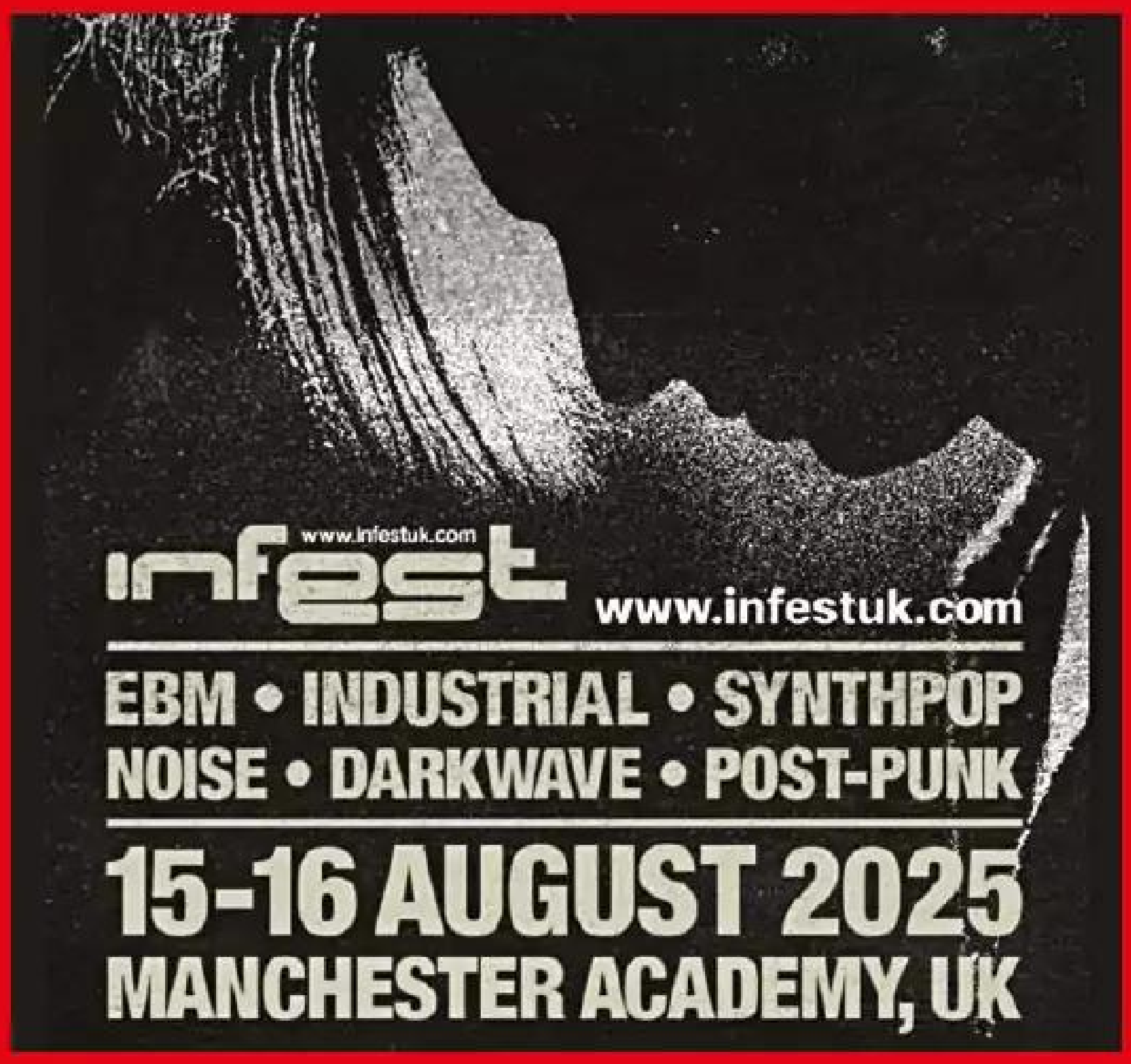
JOIN THE RETRO FESTIVAL 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
8-10th August at Newbury Showground.
Experience a blast from the past at Retro Festival, where live music, entertainment, and dance take centre stage. Three incredible stages showcase 60 years of timeless hits. Marvel at an array of vintage vehicles, from classic cars to campervans and military transports. The fashion shows and stalls will inspire your style. Enjoy endless fun with fairgrounds, sideshows, delicious food, and lively bars that keep the good times rolling.
https://retrofestival.co.uk



INFEST 2025 IS COMING
The lineup is confirmed for INFEST 2025, the 25th full edition, now at Manchester Academy, on 15-16 August. Look out for news of warm-up and closing parties too. Project Pitchfork, Eisfabrik, Blackbook, Auger, Piston Damp and many more. All ages show until 11pm. Under 14s must be accompanied. 18+ after 11pm.
http://infestuk.com/tickets

BLITZED MAGAZINE MUSIC CHART COMING SOON
The Blitzed team are refining the logistics of presenting a regular music chart consisting of the music and artists you love to see in the magazine. Watch the excitement unfold as we reveal the Top 10 songs per issue. More news to come soon!

THE BLUEBELLS ALBUM RELEASE

London Records have reissued Sisters, the beloved 1984 debut album by The Bluebells, on June 27. This fully remastered and expanded edition will be available for the first time as a double LP on black or limited purple vinyl (D2C/Townsend Music Exclusive), as well as a deluxe triple CD and DVD box set. The collection includes B-sides, non-album tracks, live and extended versions, previously unreleased BBC sessions and early takes, along with restored music videos and iconic BBC performances from Old Grey Whistle Test and Top of the Pops.

https://thebluebells.tmstor.es

TINY MAGNETIC PETS EP, A TASTER FOR NEW ALBUM

Irish darkwave trio Tiny Magnetic Pets return with a new EP, 'Harmonious Grey' in advance of their Gareth Jones-produced 4th album. 'Harmonious Grey' heralds a new, darker direction for the group, both in terms of arrangements and also lyrics. The EP is led by first single 'Low Places'. A reflection on the unreliability of the people you trust. The 'Harmonious Grey' EP is a taste of Tiny Magnetic Pets' vital, bold and exciting new direction, anticipating a new album produced by Gareth Jones, scheduled for release in late 2025.

www.tinymagneticpetsofficial.com

BOW WOW WOW TOUR

Bow Wow Wow, led by vocalist Annabella Lwin have announced a 21 date UK tour, celebrating the 45th anniversary of 'C·30 C·60 C·90 Go!' - the debut single by Bow Wow Wow, and the world's first ever cassette single. The C·30 C·60 C·90 Go! tour, Annabella's tour starts on 14th October at the Globe in Cardiff and includes a hometown show at the 229 in London on 25th October.

https://www.seetickets.com/tour/bow-wow-wow

JOHN FOXX AND THE MATHS

Originally released in late 2012, the third John Foxx and The Maths album Evidence is being released on limited edition magenta vinyl. The album brings together collaborations with The Soft Moon, Gazelle Twin, New York duo Xeno & Oaklander and Ghostly International's Matthew Dear, plus a Pink Floyd cover and some new Foxx/Benge material. Meanwhile, regular Maths live band member Hannah Peel plays violin on 'My Town'.

https://johnfoxx.tmstor.es/product/evidence-magenta-vinyl

BIGGEST EVER COLLECTORS' EDITION BOXSET OF JEFF WAYNE'S MUSICAL VERSION OF THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

For nearly five decades, Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of The War of The Worlds has remained a monumental achievement in musical storytelling—an audacious fusion of orchestral grandeur, genre-bending music, and literary drama. Now, Madfish presents two extraordinary 2025 collector's editions – The Deluxe Collectors' Edition & The Ultimate Collectors' Edition. Meticulously crafted with the full cooperation of Jeff Wayne, these boxsets contain 16 CDs, 2 Blu-rays and a plethora of collectible content.

https://jeffwaynemadfish.lnk.to/The_War_Of_The_Worlds

CHAMELEONS – ARCTIC MOON NEW ALBUM COMING

Manchester-formed post-punk legends Chameleons are revving up momentum with the announcement of their long-awaited new album, Arctic Moon. Scheduled for release on 12th September 2025 via Metropolis Records. The band will continue to tour extensively either side of album release, including a set at the Forever Now festival in Milton Keynes plus mainland European dates in Germany and the Benelux scheduled from late October ahead of a previously announced UK tour in November.

https://chameleonsband.com

BLITZ: A CLUB THAT SHAPED THE 80S - EXHIBITION

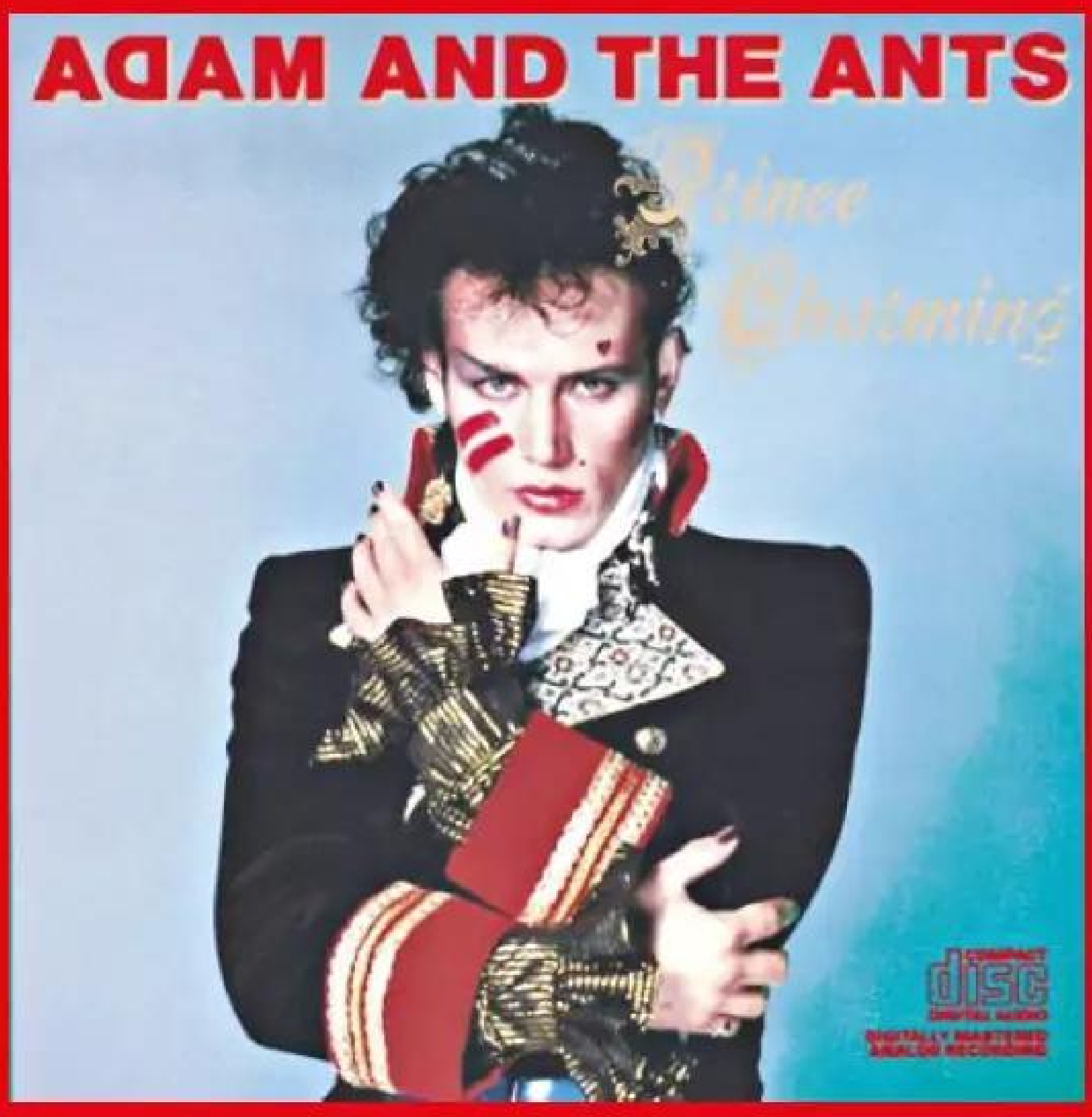
NIGHTLY CABARET/CLUB
RESTAURANT - BAR

Credit Sheila Rock

This fascinating exhibition at The Design Museum in London opens the door on the iconic Blitz Club nightspot. Forty years after its closure, visitors will be able to revisit the trailblazing club's history and atmosphere with a sensory extravaganza of music, flamboyant fashions, and pioneering art, film and graphic design. Developed in collaboration with some of the leading 'Blitz Kids' including Rusty Egan, it will feature garments, drawings, photographs and videos from the Blitz club and beyond, featuring items that have never been on public display.

https://designmuseum.org/exhibitions/blitz-the-club-that-shaped-the-80s

BLITZED QUOTES



Adam Ant
"Xerox was about David Bowie, in a nice way. It was about the idea that you take from the best and then make it yours, which is what he made a career out of".

Midge Ure
"The music became secondary, and that's when Steve (Strange) got on the camel's back in New York, and I just walked in and said, "I'm having nothing to do with this"."

Thomas Dolby
"I like the convenience of a laptop. I can save a song and even if the cleaning ladies come in and dust my equipment, it's safe."

Tony Hadley
"If you walk down the road with a Greek shirt and Middle Eastern trousers and ballet slippers, you'll get noticed, trust me on that one!"

Debbie Harry
"We probably, as primitive people, made music before we actually had a language, and that's where language comes from."

Bryan Ferry
"Women? I have no idea. I don't know anything about women at all. They're a complete mystery to me."

Jean-Michel Jarre
"When I first heard Kraftwerk, I thought they were an American band singing in German."

Steve Strange
"[Wearing lipstick, rouge, and eye-liner] One bloke recently said to me, 'Cor, mate you're not on the stage now!' - So I turned round and said to him ' My dear, I'm on stage 24 hours a day'"

David Sylvian
"Sometimes a little compromise isn't a bad thing. You don't need to be precious about it."

credit Helen Scott

‘TALKING ABOUT – POP MUZIK’

ROBIN SCOTT – M – INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Robin Scott has been an integral part of the changing face of British popular music for six decades. Having shared stages with emerging artists Ralph McTell and David Bowie on the folk circuit, Robin, a longtime friend of Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, became co-founder of the Do-It record label that launched Adam and the Ants. He produced for R&B band Roogalator, managed all-girl punk band The Slits, made films with the legendary Julien Temple and became the charismatic front man for M’s highly infectious worldwide hit ‘Pop Muzik’. Blitzed were excited to catch up with Robin who told us the background to that incredible hit, as well as introducing us to his brand-new album the FAQS of life.

How did you become involved in the project known as M, and who was involved in the band that you put together?

“I was with Malcolm McLaren at the very early stages of the punk movement, talking it through where he could go with this as an idea. I was aware that things were starting to fragment between him and the Pistols. At that point, the Slits had approached Glitterbest, that’s his office in Salisbury, looking for Malcolm’s management. He was just too busy but suggested I do it. So I ended up taking them to Paris, sort of looking out for them, and recording them with film director Julien Temple. I was in a bar with Viv Albertine, and she suggested I do something now with my own music. I managed to arrange some downtime in the studios where I was producing in Paris, and that’s where I began to get things underway with my own songs. I had, previous to that, also put early versions of ‘Moderne Man’ and ‘Satisfy Your Lust’ together. There wasn’t a band as such, it was another production project for me. That’s when I set about recording ‘M Factor’ and ‘Pop

"I was with Malcolm McLaren at the very early stages of punk"

Muzik'. And yeah, it was all down to Viv's encouragement really. My brother Julian was a bass player, and he had followed the trail to Paris with Justin Hildreth, who were both members of Roogalator, which was phasing itself out by then. I had said, "come over to Paris because the A & R Department in Barclay Records have been looking for musicians. I'm not quite sure what the project is, but come over and we'll see." The project was actually adding background music for blue movies! (laughs). Whilst doing that we met up with keyboard player Wally Badarou, so there was this string of connections happening. When I was working with Jean-Baptiste Mondino, we were in his little studio, putting the stuff together for a record sleeve and I looked out the window and saw the M for the metro. I thought, "that's it", and that's what happened."

'Pop Muzik' is regarded as one of the iconic synth pop tracks of the 80s, but it was released in early 79 before some of the well documented synth pioneers had made any impact themselves. Tell us a little about how you came up with the song and the influences behind it?

"Well, I have a very broad taste in music, very eclectic, and I was always interested in kind of avant-garde music, so the likes of Edgard Varese and Stockhausen, and of course Kraftwerk had reached my ear too. One key element in 'Pop Muzik' was the sequencing which was very embryonic then. My friend John Lewis, a gifted musician and classical composer, was running a studio in Covent Garden, and on the leading edge of that technology. I went back to him after having subsequently put two versions of the track together, which I was not happy with. Together we put down the 8 tracks of the sequence, which is the bed of the track. But when I went back to Paris, I wanted to get onto 24 tracks so I could put all the live elements in. So I had to scour around all the studios in Paris until I found a studio that had both 8 tracks and 24 tracks. Then I went back to Aquarium Studios, where I'd been getting studio downtime and started building these layers, each track separately because I wanted to get that clarity I had heard from producers in Munich, and something which was not only fresh to everybody else, but I was wanting to surprise myself."

The second album, The Official Secrets Act, saw Gary Barnacle again involved, with an amazing cast on there, including Level 42's Phil Gould and Mark King, and Riverdance composer Bill Whelan. A groundbreaking album. Well you broke even more ground on the third album, Famous Last Words, which wasn't officially released in the UK. It was a major shift of style from the previous album, a wonderfully inventive record and seemed to be pushing boundaries, and yet brought down the curtain on this chapter for M.

"Yes, both albums were fairly progressive, with Famous Last Words more so. Having worked with the amazing Ryuichi Sakamoto, I asked if his drummer Yukihiro Takahashi could come and join me, and he did. He did some amazing intricate percussive pieces. Thomas Dolby also came in and did some great programming and there was Andy Gill from Gang of Four. I can't say that it was an enjoyable album for me personally. The label, MCA, felt it was pushing boundaries too far. I fell out with MCA and that was it, we were history. We came to some arrangement much later where I managed to do the unusual. I said I'll go away and I won't ask for the third advance, which they were tied to give me anyway. I'll take 50% of that but I want all my masters back, including 'Pop Muzik', 'Moderne Man', the whole bloody lot. So I walked away with everything and own the masters to this day. Now, fortunately, everything is with BMG and I have Peter Stack to work with, a wonderful man. Everything is escalating in a way I would have never imagined, because of this new generation reinventing the popularity of 'Pop Musik'. They've latched onto it, and it's gone mad. Last week it was number two in the TikTok chart."

Music isn't your only passion. Creating original art has been part of your life throughout. So what does painting give you that music doesn't?

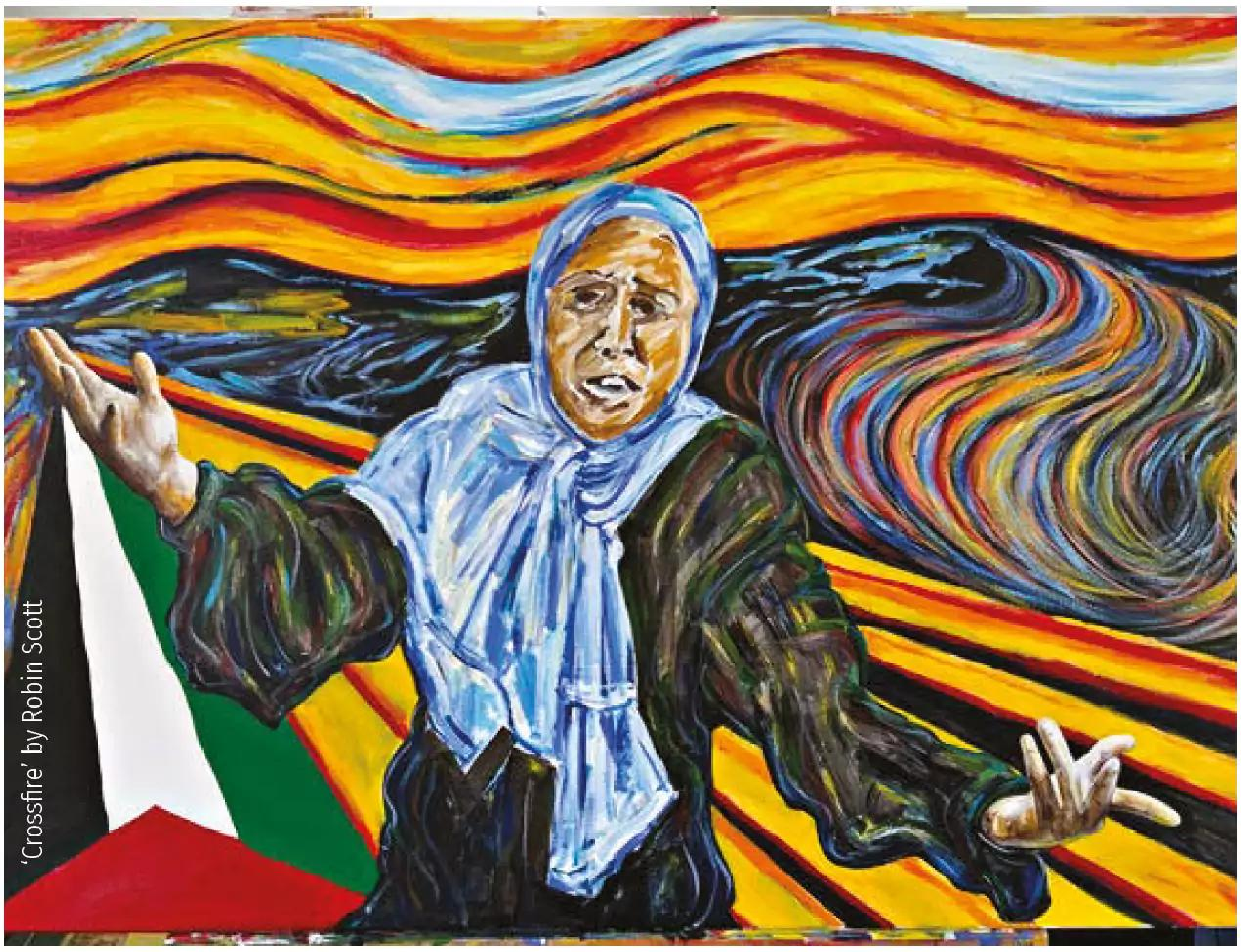
"If I make the comparison between the two in terms of the actual experience in each area, painting is really kind of solitary, it's very contemplative. You can do whatever you wish, it's your moment of playing God on your canvas. Music relies very much on the instant nature of our memory, the last few moments, and then connects it with the next and anticipates what's coming after that. And so it's very cerebral, isn't it? It's only there if you can hear it, it's there and it's gone."

So let's move on to the new album, the FAQS of life, and the ideas behind it. You had to learn new technology and techniques in order to make the album. How did that affect the production process?

"During lockdown I wanted to try and make sense of the situation and develop material. I didn't have the expertise to manage the engineering side as well as build a studio. I went into a kind of buying spree with Apple Kit and got things going, and began to manage the hardware and the software, and the complications of shifting from one operating system to another. Idea-wise, I was thinking where do we go with this? Well, we're all a bit paranoid, a little bit lonely, and we're thinking about the wider implications of such a strange period. I was really shocked when David Bowie died, only 69. I thought. f*****g hell, he's still a spring chicken. Before that Malcolm had died, and of course Vivienne. And I thought this is all really

RobinScott

"it's your moment of playing God on canvas"


'Crossfire' by Robin Scott

worrying. I started to delve into my own preoccupation with that. Trying to deliver it or deal with it in a way which I didn't really want to indulge and be morbid and introspective. So I was thinking, yeah, 'Afterlife', that's it. Let's have something which has got some power to it, but at the same time reflects on the terminal nature of this that we are. That was the earliest one in terms of using the new software and hardware, and there were a few hiccups. I wasn't so skillful in terms of programming at that point. I wanted to bring into it some kind of hip-hop, but at the same time to have something orchestral. Something that could potentially have a big bottom end to it, and yet it would have those highs, the depth and the width of classical music. But that wasn't going to become the road map. I worked with Ali Gavan, an engineer who runs his own studio in Sussex. He's a multi-instrumentalist. I put all the arrangements together, in Logic, and I put vocals on them, then he would import that into Pro Tools and then we'd start to mix the ideas. Ali is also a great backing vocalist, with a good range. And he also plays some bass, so he'd pop in and do that. And if I wanted live drums, he would do that as well. So it was between the two of us, we were developing it further and further. Phil Gould came in on one track, he had this interesting piano progression, and I said, "let's record it now". So, Ali put it down and then we put some drums on that, and then some bass. So I was doing the producer hat thing again. The vocals just came really quickly and I think it was like one or two takes and just rolled off, and that was 'Crossfire'. Suddenly there was a chemistry between people which I had longed for."

The album is very much an album of today because you're touching on topics such as the current Gaza situation, artificial intelligence, migration, political themes and the album raises the subjects and explores and questions, but it's not an album of anger or vitriol, it's an expression of your curiosity and you're inviting the person listening to contemplate rather than being lectured, was that the intention?

"Absolutely. I'm glad you've said that because basically that's the fine balance isn't it, when you start addressing such major issues like that, you can so easily balls it up. All of us who are remotely interested or exposed to current affairs, we get this kind of emotional fatigue and we're trying to sort of deal with it. Writing a song or writing a poem or a letter to somebody else, it's a way of processing your feelings and your experience, getting it off your chest. The difference with a song is potentially it's something that people are going to listen to again and again. I was trying to make it work in such a way that it wouldn't appear that I was pointing the finger. That I was just an element of reportage, but in a colourful and sympathetic tone, that's all." And for the final track on the album, I wondered who could do that better than me? William Shakespeare of course! I remember, from doing Hamlet at school, a certain amount of the main speech, and I just tried that over the top of it. I thought, "Christ, yeah, this might work". I got the whole piece in front of me and bizarrely enough, it did. It all just fell together."

Your album, the FAQS of life, is released on the 11th of July. What other plans do you have for the immediate future?

"Obviously there are singles to be released off the album and some promotion activity for those. I'd love to perform the album live, if the demand is there. To be in a room again with a bunch of musicians performing would be really exciting. But also, there's another title which I really want to work on soon, it was a co-write with my old friend Vivienne Westwood. I have the original recording of that, but I've actually now broken that down for mixing and production. I spent a lot of time with Vivienne, and she was just brilliant at writing lyrics, so I'm looking forward to that. So you can expect a version of that at some point, because for me, it's quite a special thing." ●

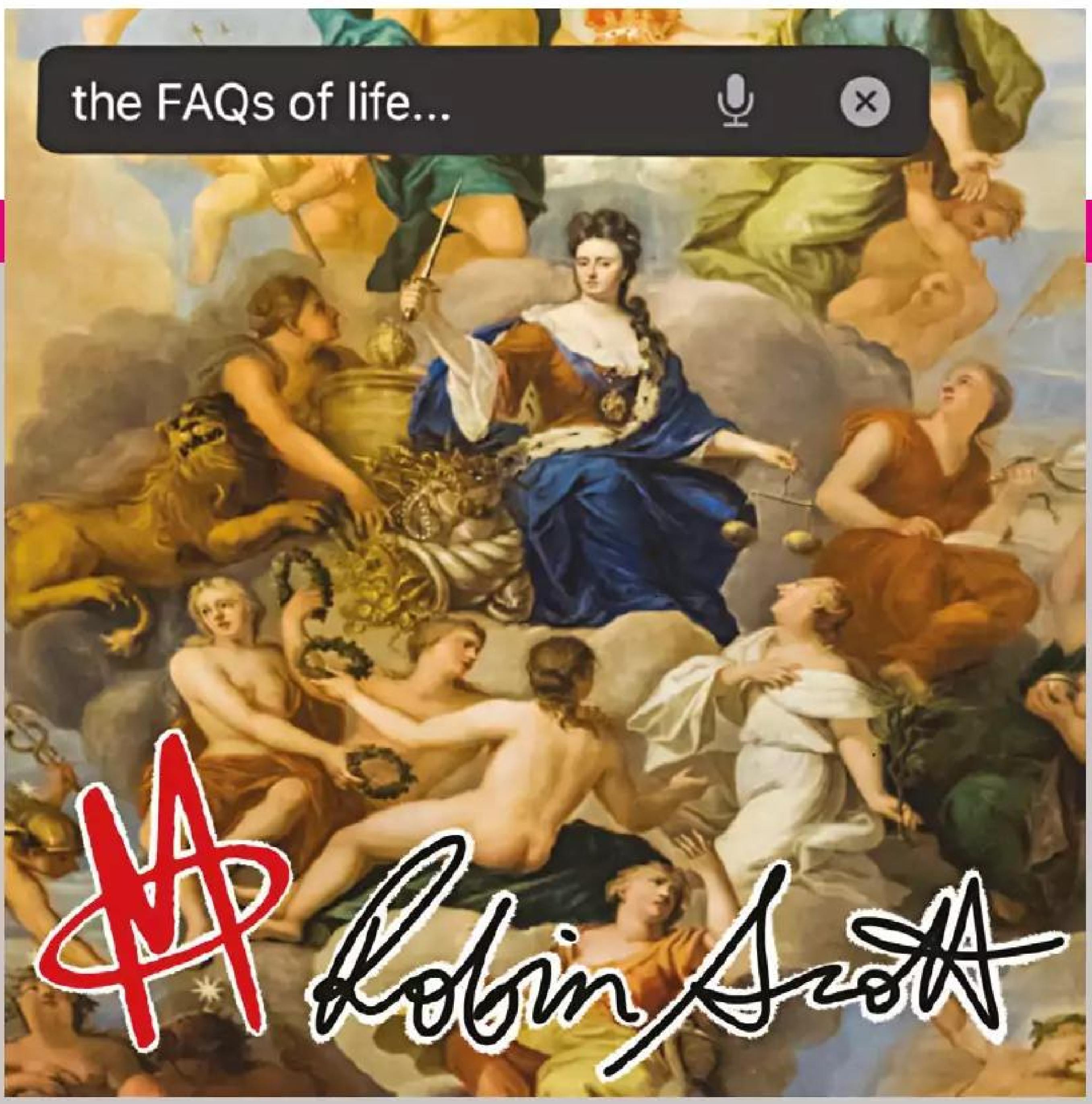
robinscott.uk

RobinScott

M / ROBIN SCOTT
THE FAQS OF LIFE

BMG

By Marc Massive



At the close of the 70s, disco was out, punk was in. Pop survived somewhere between, but with the advent of bleeping machines and an eye on futurism, Robin Scott, a suited and suave Bryan Ferry-esque figure masquerading under the 'M' moniker, was about to have the biggest hit of his career. His debut album New York. London. Paris. Munich was about to spawn a global smash that is still sounding as fresh today; 'Pop Muzik', the mobile disc jockeys wet dream, a guaranteed floor filler and a track that would forever be remixed and no doubt engraved on his tombstone. Now, the first official album under the 'M' name for forty years, a new album of catchy, perfect pop ditties has been released. 'Ai', the recent single, shows Scott is still fascinated with the future, with a voice that's become sweeter in tone, whilst keeping his pop sensibilities. The emotional album opener 'Afterlife' reflects on the loss of friends David Bowie and Malcolm McLaren, leaving legacies like 'footprints in the sand'. Punchy electro pop complements M's comeback, and I wonder who might be his audience in 2025. There's no doubt that the clever lyrics and crafted production are anything other than successful. Away from the earlier worldwide frenzy of 'Pop Muzik', it's obvious Scott found solace in other genres and styles of music, and this shows across all 14 tracks. From the reggae dub references on 'Shifting Sands', Bowie-esque 'Heroes' style vocals on 'Crossfire', a track about Gaza. Big Omen choral backing vocals on 'God Knows Why', which questions religion's value today. 'Prisoners Of Conscience' opens with those deep south guitars Martin Gore is fond of, which should appeal to Mode fans. Through rock, new wave and a touch of country, it's refreshingly without classification or genre... you would never know this was from the guy who gave us 'Pop Muzik', but the objective here, it's an album that deserves to find its audience. ●

the FAQS of life is released by BMG on 11th July. https://www.robinscott.uk

'LEXICON MEMORIES'

MARTIN FRY INTERVIEW

By Paul Browne

It's been a busy time for Martin Fry, a period of book publications, tours, anniversaries and, of course, the ongoing legacy of classic album The Lexicon of Love, the chart-topping album that propelled ABC into stardom.1982 served up some amazing music across the board, yet ABC delivered some truly memorable singles culled from the parent album, including 'Poison Arrow', 'The Look of Love' and 'All of My Heart', all of which reached the top ten.

With over four decades since The Lexicon of Love's release and during a time when it's still held in high regard, it's surprising to hear Mr. Fry being more philosophical on the album's legacy. "I never really sit down and think about it. Although I can see bands that have been influenced by us through the years. I get a warm feeling when I hear The Weekend or parts of Lady Gaga's work and stuff like that. You can feel that eighties creative, flamboyant vibe at play."

Instead, Martin is more focused on the present ("I live in the moment") when it comes to matters concerning ABC. Taking to the stage, however, is something which clearly fires up a passion. "It's a great feeling to stand on stage in front of an audience and play the ABC catalogue. But to be able to play a song from over thirty years ago and for it to still mean something to the audience feels really good. It's not just the hit records. Sometimes people warm to various album tracks we play and it means a lot to them. I look out there and I realise as an elder statesman of pop that people got married to 'The Look Of Love' and divorced to 'That Was Then but This Is Now' and had grandchildren to 'Viva Love'. So, I really do value the sort of potency of songs, not just ABC. I think that's why people leave their homes and go out and watch bands play live. There's something really fundamental about it." Nonetheless, the suave pop

> “I really do value the sort of potency of songs”

of The Lexicon Of Love had all the right ingredients from the start. The album featured the production talents of Trevor Horn as well as orchestral arrangements by Anne Dudley. Alongside the quality songwriting, the chemistry worked its magic. But it prompts the question on why the album has endured so well over the years. “Well, I always say everybody’s had a broken heart” muses Martin. “They identify with songs like ‘Poison Arrow’ and to some degree ‘The Look Of Love’ and ‘All Of My Heart’. But when we play the show, with full orchestra, we play a whole range of stuff from the ABC back catalogue and then finish the set playing The Lexicon Of Love in its entirety. It’s a really hard question to answer genuinely. I don’t know why I still listen to The Velvet Underground or Steely Dan or Sly Stone, Roxy Music. I think in a way with The Lexicon Of Love that it was kind of a complete package, it’s like we wanted to introduce people to the world of ABC, an imaginary world, a wish-fulfilled world, coming out of Sheffield in 1981.”

Later this year, ABC return to the stage to present the album, alongside other cuts from the ABC catalogue, giving the music a dazzling orchestral sheen. “It’s a celebration of that record. It’s on steroids, it’s blown up bigger because we ever had a full orchestra originally. We had to have two hit records before Phonogram would let us near a violin. There are no strings, but there were a lot of Solinas and Korg MS 40s; synths that we tried to make sound like strings.”

Last year also saw the publication of A Lexicon of Life, which marked a long overdue Martin Fry autobiography. “It originally started as an art book, which retailed at about £300. It was an enormous book wrapped in gold lamé, all this Savile Row fabric that I wore, I wanted to wrap it in the same material as my tuxes, and that was kind of a collection of photographs. Then I wrote an autobiography. It wasn’t originally a book, it was more like a box full of things, because it had an acoustic album in there and facsimiles of lyric books, workbooks I’d used making records and stuff in the past. It just felt right, I just figured I’d approach looking back and looking at my life, really. As you get older, you get a chance to have that sort of perspective.”

“After I’d written it, I kind of realised, when I was a kid wandering around Manchester, going to see Gong with Steve Hillage or Tangerine Dream or Queen and Roxy Music, I realised only now I must have been on some sort of path leading to being a lead singer in a band.” Martin’s formative years also saw trips to legendary venues such as The Factory and Electric Circus, which all served as inspiration as well as introducing him to a broader world. “They were golden days. I just had this desire to escape the suburb I lived in, Bramhall. It’s only writing the book, I started to think about some of the paths I’ve taken and the sacrifices you make.”

Meanwhile, this year sees the anniversary of ABC’s third album How to Be a ... Zillionaire!, a release which proved a startling visual and musical departure from the previous smooth ABC image, instead stepping out into pure Pop Art. “It’s funny, because when I play in the States, I play ‘Vanity Kills’, ‘Ocean Blue’, ‘(How To Be A) Millionaire’ and ‘Be Near Me’, which was one of our biggest hits, they’re all on that album. When it came to make that record, we just wanted to go in a completely different direction, electronically using some Fairlight, Emulator sampling - and it was recorded digitally. That album was about psychically trying to go to the edge at the time. I know you can record everything on a phone now and it’s a different world. But back then, we spent as much time making the 12” mixes as we did as making the album. That’s our biggest selling album in America, partly down to the clubs. We made scratch videos and stuff to play in the clubs where you’d take stuff off TV and manipulate it. Likewise the mixes, there’s a whole world of club mixes that developed. So, it’d be nice to celebrate it, very much so. I mean I play a couple of songs in the orchestral set. It sold OK in the UK and in Europe, but it really took off for us in America. Other musicians seem to like it and we had a couple of hits, but it wasn’t received the same way as, say, The Lexicon Of Love. It wasn’t like a phenomenon. At the time, I remember we played The Tube live, using the Fairlights and stuff, two of them, running off Fairlight code. That was a nightmare. But it was an innovative time. It was different. But at the time, a lot of people said, ‘Where’s the gold suit?’”

Following the release of the Zillionaire! album, there was also a darker episode in Martin’s life when he was struck down with a serious illness which took him out of action for a while. “Everything stopped. I had to go have radiotherapy at the Royal Marsden. I had a couple of operations as well. It was like overnight, bang! I was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Disease and I had to face up to that. So, a lot changed for me overnight, radically. But also, I was really self-conscious. I’d go into a hospital ward and somebody would go “oh, I hope nobody can see me now, the guy from ABC’s in there...” That’s the downside of fame, being that level of self-conscious. I mean who gives a f**k? You’re in hospital! (laughs). At first, I thought it was like a curse. Why me? But as I got better, you get a tick in a box as you move away from your treatment and you get better, stronger. It fires me up now, when on stage. But there’s people every single day with those diagnoses. I’m not here trying to be an expert on the subject, but it definitely did change me.” The impetus for the orchestral live shows draws from an invitation to play the Albert Hall fifteen years previously, a period which clearly inspired Martin. “Trevor Horn came down and did a little speech in the half time intermission.

credit Ken Harrison

> "You've got to be a maverick and beat your own rhythm"

Reunited with Anne Dudley conducting we set about putting scores together for a whole range of stuff through the ABC catalogue. Anne Dudley is a phenomenal musician. She was in The Art Of Noise; she's produced a lot of hit records she never tells you about. She's won an Oscar or two for her soundtrack work and she's a brilliant orchestral conductor. I've known Anne for forty years since the sessions we did at Sarm East on The Lexicon of Love. It feels good to put those songs in that context, with full orchestras. It's like being a pilot of a jumbo jet, because you've got sixty-five people on stage playing the songs..."

With new ABC releases, it allows for some vital perspective. "I did The Lexicon of Love II a couple of years back and it's fascinating to compete in the album charts with acts that are a third my age. Although when I look at New Order and Depeche Mode, Tears For Fears, all these bands out there making contemporary sounding records - or making records that represent themselves - I kind of admire that. It's nice to feel you're part of that whereby you've got a past and a present. I wouldn't like to be seventeen years old and demoing my first set of songs. It's very, very hard. Bands that have been around a long time like ourselves, that's why that legacy is a foot in the door in a way, because you've had visibility in the past, it's very hard for people to get visibility now. Also it's really difficult to sustain a band on the road now. It's expensive."

Touring aside, what does the future hold for Martin Fry and ABC? "I'm probably going to make another record, I've written some songs. It is that simple. You write some songs and record them. I can't see ABC lasting forever. But at the moment, it feels good to be out there. It would be nice actually to take the orchestral show and play it in America. I played a lot of festivals and I'm kind of thinking I'm done with it now." Finally, are there any regrets from Martin looking back at his extensive music career? "No regrets really. You know anything we did was all about us, the decisions we made as a band, so I stick by it. It would have been nice to duplicate the success of the first album, but how long would you have done that? It'd just be diluting it and we definitely wanted to change and tack into the wind every time we made a record. That was really an obsessive part of being in the band, that's what being in a band was about. Trying to change and challenge yourself as much as you possibly could. To come up with different ideas, new ideas. I regret not playing live as much in the 1980s. it would have been nice to have built up that legacy. But I play a lot of shows now, in the last ten years, so I've no regrets there." ●

ABC will be performing The Lexicon of Love Orchestra Tour in October/November 2025. Tickets: www.gigsandtours.com/tour/abc

credit Ken Harrison

ABC ★★★

the Lexicon of Love

ABC perform the classic album in its entirety plus their greatest hits, accompanied by The Lexicon Sinfonia orchestra. Conducted by Anne Dudley.

October 2025

30 **BOURNEMOUTH** *IC*
31 **CARDIFF** *Utilita Arena*

November 2025

01 **BRIGHTON** *Centre*
03 **BIRMINGHAM** *Symphony Hall*
04 **SOUTHEND** *Cliffs Pavilion*
06 **NOTTINGHAM** *Royal Concert Hall*
07 **SHEFFIELD** *City Hall*
09 **LONDON** *Palladium*
10 **LONDON** *Palladium*
13 **NEWCASTLE** *O2 City Hall*
14 **GLASGOW** *Armadillo*
15 **EDINBURGH** *Usher Hall*
17 **LIVERPOOL** *Philharmonic*
20 **BATH** *Forum*
21 **MANCHESTER** *O2 Apollo*
22 **BLACKPOOL** *Opera House*

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LIFE AFTER LIVE AID

By Steven Swaby

'Do They Know It's Christmas?'

There were benefit gigs before Live Aid, and there have been many since. But 13th July 1985 stands as a genuine watershed moment in pop culture. That's not hyperbole either. Groundbreaking in its ambition, scale and seat-of-the-pants delivery, Live Aid remains the biggest benefit concert in history. Along with forerunner Band Aid, it was a catalyst for the flood of large-scale benefit gigs and charity singles that followed. It established a major awareness and fundraising model for humanitarian and political causes, and for better and worse, indelibly set the symbiotic relationship between charity and celebrity. Organised in mere months, the day was a remarkable logistical achievement. It managed to stage more than 70 artists and bands, who performed over 16 hours of live music across the two concerts held at Wembley Stadium, London, and in the USA at JFK Stadium, Philadelphia. It was a massive success.

Of course not everyone was enamoured with the idea of Live Aid. Stevie Wonder was among the major acts that declined to participate, citing a lack of racial diversity on the bill. Bruce Springsteen was, frankly, too shagged out after concluding a major tour the previous week and also passed. Predictably, Morrissey wasn't keen either, having vilified Band Aid and dismissed it as "the undiscussable" in Smash Hits (you can tell who wasn't invited, can't you?).

Whatever the varying motivations of participating artists, the event made a genuine difference in a time of crisis. And it really was a crisis. The Ethiopian famine of 1983–1985 killed between 600,000 and one million people, internally displaced 2.5 million, and left 400,000 refugees. Caused by a lethal combination of drought and war, it quickly escalated to become one of the worst disasters in modern history.

As Adam Curtis observed in his 2021 documentary series Can't Get You Out Of My Head, "What Live Aid seemed to show was that it might be possible to change the world, but to do it you had to bypass all politics. Because politicians both left and right had become corrupted by power and petty nationalism".

This frustration with conventional channels had been a driving force in Bob Geldof and Midge Ure's Band Aid initiative, and with Live Aid, this direct-action approach upped the ante, demonstrating that there really was another way – driven by people power – to raise awareness and respond quickly to a humanitarian crisis. The day ultimately raised £40 million, and the Band Aid Trust has since raised more than £140 million to support prevention or relief of poverty and famine around the globe. Live Aid was only possible

at such a scale because of advances in comms technology. It was one of the largest satellite link-ups and television broadcasts of all time, reaching an estimated audience of 1.9 billion people in 150 nations. The world was getting smaller. But inevitably the fast-moving show was occasionally beset by technical difficulties, although the spirit of the day prevailed. You may remember Paul McCartney soldiering on like a pro when his mic cut out, or Roger Daltrey f-f-fading away mid-set. Some younger viewers had to be reassured that the buzzing sound heard during Bob Dylan's set was actually his singing voice.

Many stadium gigs for causes followed in Live Aid's wake. Nelson Mandela's 70th Birthday Party at Wembley Stadium in June 1988 raised international awareness and piled on the pressure for South Africa's apartheid regime to release the ANC leader and other political prisoners. The political nature of the gig was controversial; the UK government still labelled the ANC a terrorist organisation, and footage was heavily censored on US broadcast (I know, hard to imagine censorship in America today, eh readers?). Watched by an estimated 600 million people, it made a big noise, and was arguably a contributing factor that led to Mandela's release. With newly democratic elections, he subsequently became the nation's first Black president.

In 2005, Live 8 sought to recapture the spirit of Live Aid 20 years on, with gigs at ten venues around the world. It drew criticism for its lack of African artists, and the ultimate failure of G8 nations to follow through on the rhetoric of the day. The London gig is also memorable for the unedifying spectacle of watching Pink Floyd's perma-feuding Roger Waters and David Gilmour pretending to like each other for around two minutes.

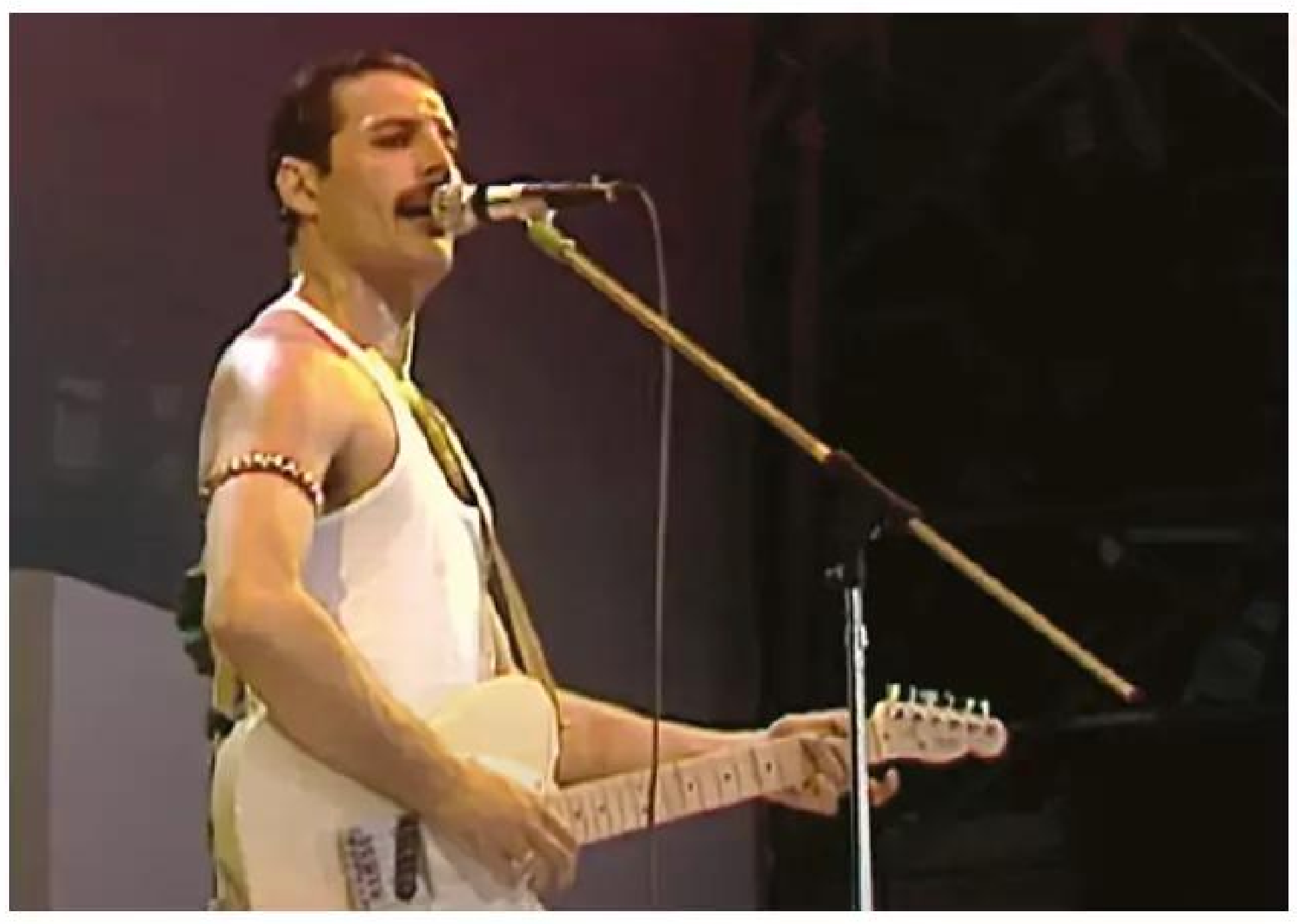
The Band Aid-Live Aid axis also established the tradition of the charity single, and many followed: good, bad and ugly. From Ferry Aid to LadBaby, at least 56 charity singles have reached number 1 in the UK singles chart since 'Do They Know It's Christmas?'. Elton John's mega-selling 'Candle In The Wind 1997', released following the death of Princess Diana, even outsold Band Aid, with 4.93 million copies making it the UK's all-time bestseller to date. Remarkably, Sir Elton achieved this while simultaneously bearing an uncanny resemblance to this writer's great auntie Vi. Multiple versions of 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' featuring different performers have also been released since 1984. One aspect of this phenomenon is aging pop fans of the original being able to identify progressively fewer of the artists in each subsequent line-up. The 40th anniversary version at least offered some familiar faces by providing a mash-up of the original, 20th and 30th anniversary versions. It too hit number 1.

Arguably the charity single genre rapidly reached its nadir within months of Band Aid, with 'Doctor In Distress'. This was a charity single that made no money and, although well-meaning in its aim to save Doctor Who from cancellation by the BBC, ironically had many ardent Whovians actively wishing for the show to be put out of its misery if this sort of thing was going to happen. If you're not familiar with this, um, remarkable waxing, it survives on YouTube. But be warned: it really isn't for the faint-hearted. After the Live Aid money came rolling in, it wasn't all good news. What soon emerged on the ground in Ethiopia was a grim, unexpected side-effect. The food generated by Live Aid funds was being weaponised by the Ethiopian Derg regime in their ongoing civil war with rebel factions. Dictator Colonel Mengistu rounded up thousands of starving people who had come to the camps seeking aid, and they were loaded at gunpoint onto aircraft and flown to resettlement camps. Mengistu's aim was to move millions of people from the rebel-occupied north to the empty southern region – but this policy of forced relocation is believed to have resulted in the death of up to 50,000 people due to starvation, disease and exhaustion.

Live Aid was estimated to have cut the Ethiopian famine death toll by half, but some critics claimed it inadvertently led to the same number of deaths anyway. It became a highly volatile debate that continues today: does charitable aid given to alleviate a problem actually create new problems? But if so, what's the alternative? Some commentators view charitable initiatives like Band Aid as detrimental to African development, and its 'white saviour' connotations have drawn a lot of flak, to Bob Geldof in particular; an accusation he refutes in trademark robust style by dismissing it as "the greatest load of bollocks ever".

The fact is, the spectre of famine has reappeared, in nations including Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Nigeria, Madagascar, Ethiopia and now Gaza. A perfect storm of accelerating climate change, armed conflicts and knock-on effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are ingredients for catastrophe. According to the most recent report on the global food crisis, in 2023 almost 282 million people around the world were suffering from acute food insecurity. Forty years on, the Band Aid Trust is still one of many aid organisations working to combat this existential threat to people around the world. Whatever your view of it, Live Aid's 'global jukebox' remains one of those transformative landmark cultural moments that really did create change. ●

Find out more about the Band Aid Charitable Trust at: www.bandaidtrust.co.uk



LIVE AID ALUMNI: WHAT THEY DID NEXT

Snapshots of just a few of the performers who were there on the day giving it their all, or thereabouts..

THOMAS DOLBY

'Played keyboards with Bowie's band at Live Aid' was just another bullet point on a very busy CV for Thomas Morgan Dolby Robertson. He went on to compose soundtracks, establish the Beatnik software company, write a memoir, build an eco-friendly home studio on a lifeboat and teach at the Peabody Institute. Patient fans have been rewarded with just three studio albums since 1985, and while Dolby still tours sporadically, there are no imminent plans for a new album. Some might say bloody bone idle, that man.

ADAM ANT

Bob Geldof is quoted in his book saying "Adam was over the hill, so I let him have one number", and indeed Mr. Ant was granted stage-time at Wembley for just one measly song. Ever the contrarian, he chose to play 'Vive Le Rock', a new song most of the watching world had never heard. He later regretted his participation in the event, saying "Knighthoods were made, Bono got it made... it was the end of rock and roll". Adam struggled with mental health issues during his wilderness years, but a subsequent and successful return to touring has sealed his place as one of the all-time great cult pop stars. And he can still rock and roll.

SIMPLE MINDS

Tellingly, with eyes on the prize, the Minds played the US leg of the show. In 1985 they were on the cusp of massive stateside success following breakthrough single 'Don't You (Forget About Me)', and commercial-peak album Once Upon A Time was just a few months away. The band used their newly-elevated platform to advocate for causes such as Amnesty International, a political stance that stalled their career in America by the end of the '80s. After a tough period where they struggled to find their place, the Kerr and Burchill-led band has regained form in the 21st century, with prolific touring and a series of re-energised new albums.

U2

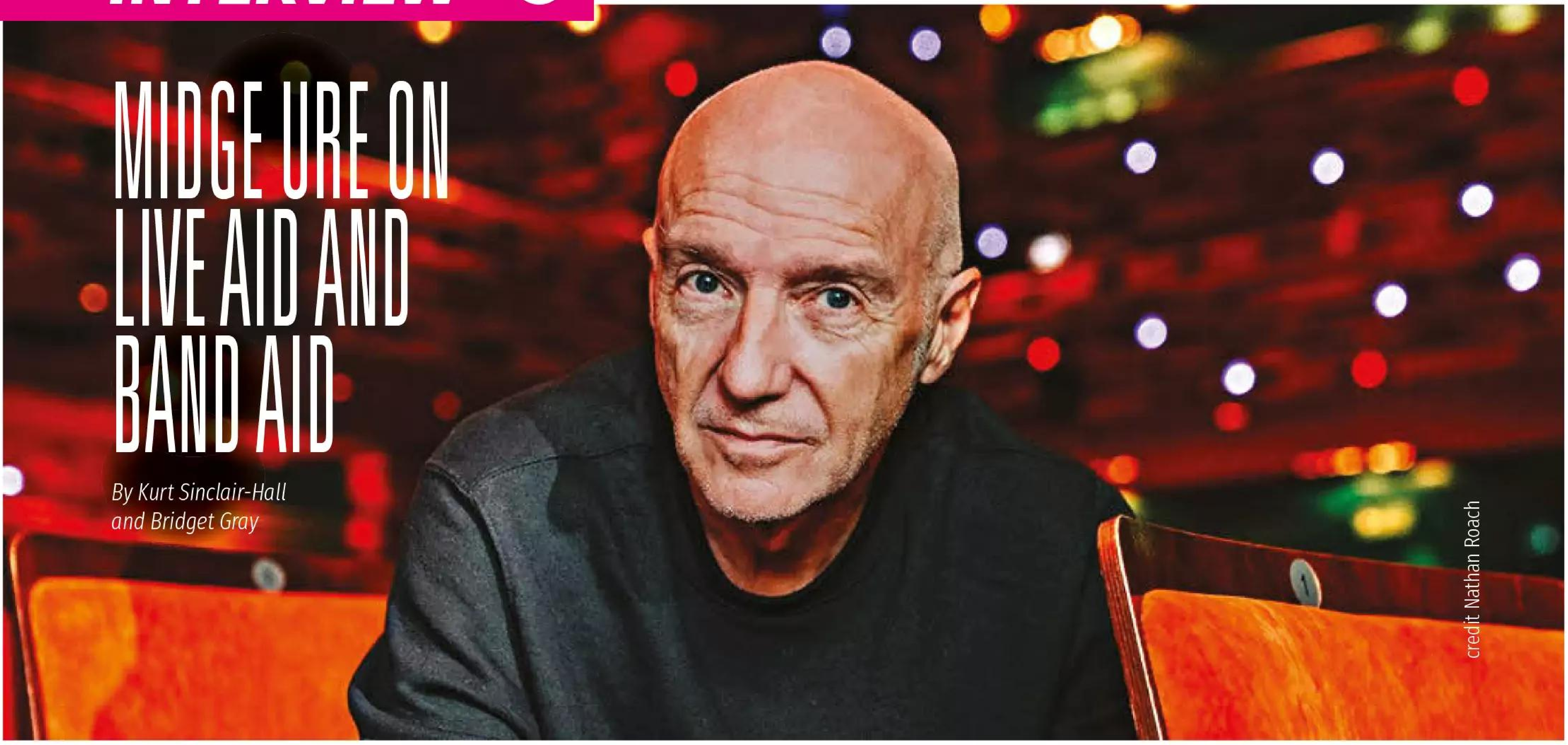
Perhaps the best example of the Live Aid effect, U2 were rising stars who went stratospheric after the gig. Although an increasingly Marmite proposition in the decades since, they have sold an astonishing 175 million records worldwide and continue to fill arenas and stadiums whenever they tour. Bono's long-term commitment to humanitarian activism in Africa has at times threatened to derail the band entirely, but for all the critical brickbats, he has campaigned with dedication for anti-poverty and HIV/AIDS causes. And the mullet? Evidently it still haunts the singer, who, in his autobiography Surrender confessed that when it comes remembering Live Aid, "all I see is the ultimate bad hair day".

SMITH & JONES

Was Live Aid also the birth of 'comedy as the new rock n' roll'? A-list comedians such as Peter Kay routinely sell out arenas these days, but back in the mid-80s seeing comedy performed on a huge stage was an incongruous rarity. Mel Smith and Griff Rhys-Jones' memorable intro to Queen's set at Wembley was a well-timed skit that amply demonstrated the relationship between comedy, music and causes could be a seamless affair, and one that flourished as the decade progressed.

QUEEN

With hindsight, we can safely say Freddie Mercury was never destined for a career in chartered accountancy. Winning over thousands of people in packed stadiums was in his lifeblood, and he made it look effortless. Whether you're a fan of Queen or not (many were before Live Aid, and many, many more were afterwards) their performance was one of the highlights of the day. The band captured that joyful communal spirit of the experience, and although Bob Geldof was reportedly not keen on having them on the bill, Queen's performance has become indelibly connected to the event in our collective cultural memory. Their next album, 1986's A Kind Of Magic sold over two million copies, so Live Aid was probably worth getting out of bed for. ●



MIDGE URE ON LIVE AID AND BAND AID

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

credit Nathan Roach

In the early 1980s, Live Aid and Band Aid changed the face of public fundraising forever. Both were incredibly innovative, groundbreaking concepts that made global fundraising possible through entertainment. Alongside fellow musician Bob Geldof, Midge Ure was tasked with harnessing the talent of the highest profile rock and pop star lineup of the time, and using that creative energy as a force for change and a catalyst for creating worldwide goodwill, raising essential funds to help famine relief in Africa. Midge was delighted to chat with Blitzed Editors Kurt and Bridget about his involvement in two of the most socially important music projects in world history.

As if you didn't have enough on your plate in the early 80s, you were invited by Bob Geldof to get on board with the Band Aid and Live Aid projects. How did he sell it to you and what did you think you could sensibly achieve?

"I was doing The Tube television show, and Bob phoned Paula Yates. I was standing next to her when the phone rang. Paula just said Bob wants to talk to me. He had just seen the initial Michael Buerk footage on TV, and thought more needed to be done to help. The Boomtown Rats were finished at the time, and Bob said "I want to do this thing. Will you help?", obviously with some way of raising some funds. So we met up and came to the obvious conclusion that we're useless at everything except maybe putting a record together. So it grew from there to being a Christmas record. If we could get it to number one at the time, based on the royalties that an artist would normally generate, we reckoned we could maybe earn £100,000!"

Was it easy to get the artists all on board?

"Bob did most of that. He wanted Trevor Horn to produce the record, but Trevor's very slow, gets brilliant results, but takes a long time. I just finished building my studio in the garden and I said OK I'll do it. But Trevor lent his studio too. So I spent four or five days playing all the instruments and putting it all together, whilst Bob bludgeoned various pop stars on board. It was scary because he hadn't spoken to the managers or anything, and musicians are pretty flaky people at the best of times. The fact that any of them remembered when it was, was actually quite a miracle."

There have been a few versions of 'Do They Know it's Christmas', but the original song still creates goosebumps, and for lots of reasons; because of the age that we were when it came out, the stage in our lives, and also the harrowing visuals that we remember from the TV. Seeing so many artists with all their egos, coming together for a humanitarian thing and also the reaction of people around the world being united, has never been seen before. But also, it was a really good song. How do you feel about the song itself?

"I think the song's OK, but the record is better than the song, which is a stupid thing to say because they're all connected. I think the record really captured people's imaginations. You know that ominous beginning? It's the antithesis of what a Christmas song should be. It ends up like a Christmas song with the Jingle Bells and stuff like that. But the bells at the beginning are actually the clanging chimes of doom. They are death tolls. It sets a picture in your head which, as you just said, encapsulated the harrowing images that we'd all seen on television. So it was that landscape that was the soundtrack at the beginning of the song. And it slowly but surely crept its way along and got bigger and bigger until the 'Feed the World', the sort of 'Happy Christmas War is Over' bit... But as Bob described it, "the sing along", it's a song with no chorus, it's a weird structure, but it felt right to do it that way rather than doing the Bruce Springsteen-

"Bob bludgeoned various pop stars"

esque big brass section. I suppose if you put it side by side with 'We Are the World', it's a very different animal."

At one point you took one of your daughters to Ethiopia to see what was happening over there. How did you persuade her to go, and with what she found when she was there, how did it affect her?

"When Save the Children asked me to go back again to try and tell people what had changed and what hadn't changed, I said if you want to get younger people on board who can make a difference, have someone their age speak to them. So they thought it was a great idea, and Kitty was very up for it. There was one moment where I'm sitting on the edge of a dead crop, and the crops didn't come because the rains didn't. Kitty had no real idea of how things worked. And she was talking to this sixteen-year-old girl about can you buy things etc, and she said "No, there's nothing to buy. We've got no money to buy anything". And then Kitty said to her, "So what happens if the aid stops?" And the girl just said, "well, we die" … and it was that simple. There was no drama. Kitty came away and wrote this fantastic piece for the Save the Children youth magazine and that was infinitely more beneficial than me wandering around, another pop star, with little hungry children hanging onto my arms".

Back in the day, it was so shocking, scary and stark seeing all those horrific images of starving human beings, and then that whole wave of support and emotion with Band Aid and Live Aid. And there have been so many different versions of the song through the years, but you can't really recreate that initial impact and shock again can you? How do you keep it going and keep people involved after all these years?

"As a Band Aid trustee, it's our responsibility to generate as much income as that song can. So doing different versions every decade, doing the musical that's going to the West End, put them on sync licences and stuff for movies, it's our job to kind of, dare I say, exploit in the best possible way that song, because that song will generate money long after Bob and I and the entire Band Aid Trust are gone. We're looking after it because it's our baby and we've been doing it for forty years. So we now have to try and find someone who will be equally responsible for it, even though it's not theirs. Yes, you cannot recreate that magic essence that was in the air when the Band Aid thing happened. Back then you had no smartphones, and you had no internet and no 24-hour television. Everybody saw the TV news, whether it was ITV or BBC or Channel 4 or whatever. And we all read newspapers. Back then people honestly wanted to help and make a difference. And maybe forty years ago we were less cynical, I don't know, but you cannot recreate that. So every so often a new version comes out and people say, "I still prefer this one. I prefer that one" … but it doesn't matter. The only people cashing in on it are the people or the recipients of the money that it generates."

The scale of the Live Aid event was so phenomenal the world had never seen anything like it before, and broadcasting to virtually 40% of the population. How were you and Bob during the show? Were you excited, focused, nervous, or terrified of everything?

"I can't remember seeing Bob, he was running around like a headless chicken. You know, obviously man of the moment. He had done his bit with the [Boomtown] Rats and he was hanging out with the Royals. And then he had to go and

do interviews, and he was constantly photographed. So I didn't really see an awful lot of Bob, but I didn't see anybody. I didn't seem to be in the same area as David Bowie or Elton John, which is typical really. I was stuck somewhere else. Bob was the man of the moment. I had a much nicer Live Aid than Bob did."

You must have felt incredibly proud of everyone involved and for humanity for being selfless and creating history?

"Absolutely, yes. We saw the best side of humanity. But it wasn't until maybe a year or so later that it hit home how big the achievement was. The little girl next door came in when I was making some pasta. Because we used to leave the door wide open and the neighbours kept popping in, and we popped in theirs too, and she said, "oh, we read about you in school today in a history book", and that's when it kind of hit home just how ridiculously huge this thing had got."

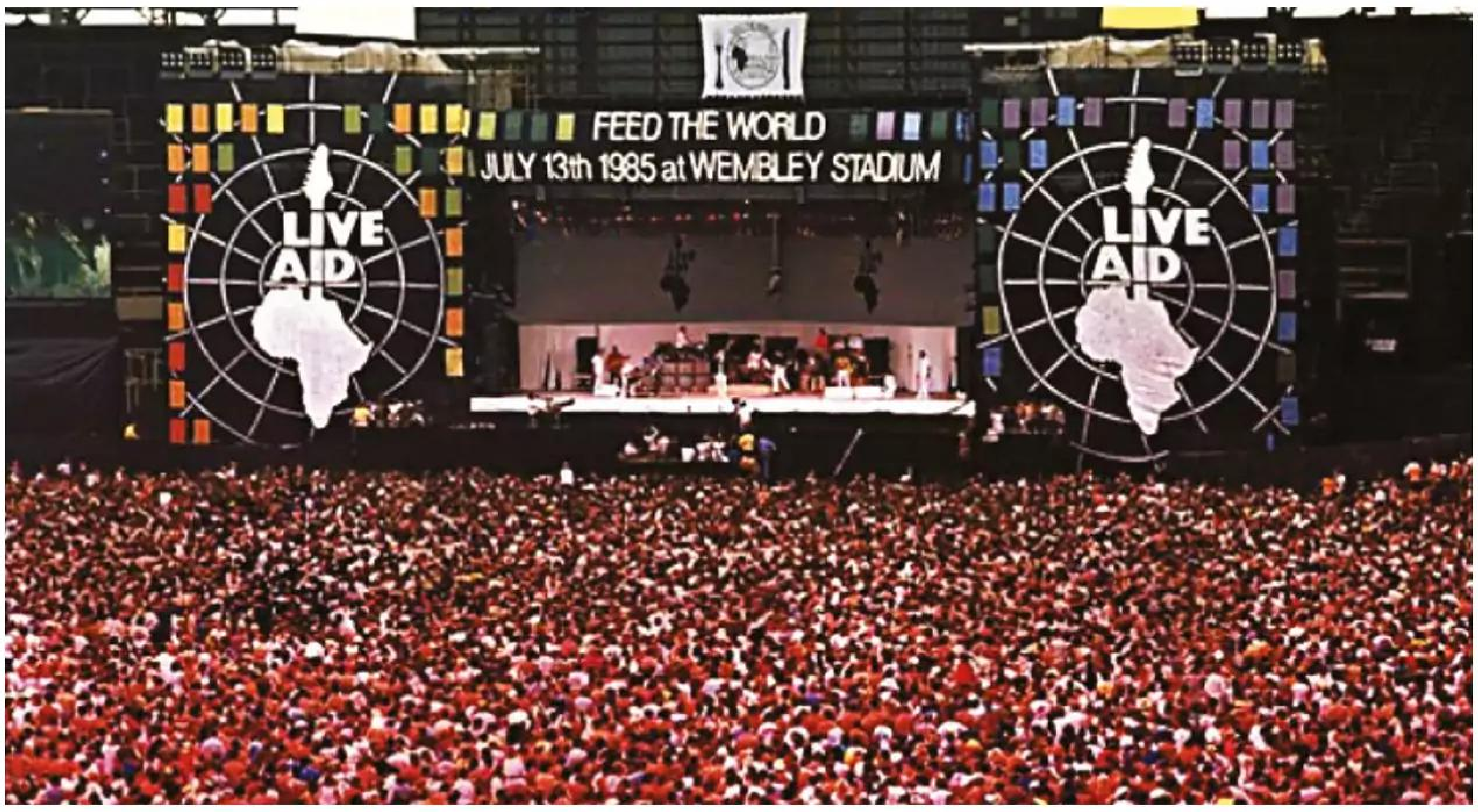
You continued your humanitarian and charity work with the Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute event, The Princess Trust, Music for Montserrat, Breakthrough Breast Cancer charity, Live 8 concerts, ambassador for Save the Children, and were awarded the OBE for your endeavours and also five honorary doctorates from various UK universities. What is it that drives you, when other people that can make a difference look away, and makes you want to help people and make a difference to their lives?

"My take on anybody being asked to do something to help someone else is if it's not too difficult, why wouldn't you? Nobody has knocked on my door and said, "we'd like you to cut your left arm off for charity". It's always, "we'd like you to do what you do". And you get a chance to share a stage with Elton John, Eric Clapton and David Bowie, because we're all fans. People forget that. I think after my initial visit to Ethiopia with the first shipment of aid that we sent out, I came back a very different person. When you see absolute poverty, not just "I've not got enough to pay the rent this week" or "I can't pay my phone bill", I mean absolute poverty... where if someone doesn't give you something to eat, you die... when you come back from that, you reassess everything that you've got and everything you do. After the Band Aid thing, you realise that you're responsible for all the funds that come in up until the day you die. It's a lifelong commitment."

Have the traumatic experiences and memories of being heavily involved with the whole Live Aid and Band Aid project had a lasting impact on your life?

"You hug your kids a bit more than maybe you normally would. I think there's an awareness, and I grew up very quickly. Before Band Aid, I was still a kid travelling the world with my band, not a care in the world, it was great. Then responsibility comes along, you have a family, and you experience something like visiting Third World countries in dire situations, and it does change you. The songwriting for Ultravox changed, the subject matter of the songs changed. Up to that point it was quite chopped up lyrics and cinematic imagery, disjointed in a way, not really a linear story as such. I had changed quite a bit and I started writing more stories, but based on reality so I can see a divide there. But I have experienced what I have, and it has helped to make me who I am." ●

Find out more about Midge Ure at www.midgeure.co.uk
Find out more about the Band Aid Charitable Trust at www.bandaidtrust.co.uk



‘I’M COMING HOME’ MARK FORDYCE – THE MOOD – INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall
and Bridget Gray

credit Amelia Fordyce

The Mood are a Yorkshire-based synthpop band formed in 1980 that missed out on the big-time by a whisker. Frustrated by the lack of support from management and labels, they called it a day in 1984, with their legacy of pop tunes, mostly unheard, locked away for four decades… until now. Blitzed met up with Mark Fordyce on a beautiful morning in Stratford-upon-Avon, to discover why The Mood have finally returned to the public eye with a fascinating retrospective album.

Who were your major influences that made you want to be musicians and performers?

“I loved The Human League’s early stuff like ‘Being Boiled’, and then OMD dropped ‘Electricity’. Then of course Gary Numan came via Top of the Pops and we thought, ‘Jesus, what the hell is that?’ I wanted to be in a band like Tubeway Army that melded synthesisers and guitar pop, and The Mood was that band.”

1980, Track Records in York, an independent record shop. That’s where it all started? Who made the first move to get the band together?

“Track Records was the independent record shop where everyone hung out on a Saturday morning for the new releases. I got to know the band there, they played about two gigs before I joined, and that got me sold that this is the band for me. So I joined, quickly followed by Eric, the only person we knew that had a synthesiser, a Korg MS-20.”

the MOOD
RCA

Your first release in 1981 was on your own label, but soon you were getting noticed.

“Eric and myself started to shape the sound of what the band became, and it was about six months later that we then put together our first release on our own independent label. There was a club called Leeds Warehouse and Marc Almond worked there checking the coats. Martin, a DJ there, started playing the record, and it really took off from there. Sounds Magazine used to run their Futurist Chart, and we got a number six placing, which got the attention of a couple of guys who became our managers, and there was a bidding war between all the majors. The deal we signed with RCA was a half a million-pound deal, and suddenly we’re bumping up against The Human League, ABC, Soft Cell, even Depeche Mode opened for us at the Amnesia Club.”

The single ‘Paris is One Day Away’ almost made the UK Top 40 in 1982, and you just missed out on Top of the Pops. How close were you to getting that call up?

“We were out filming the video in Paris, and we got told to return to the UK because we have the ‘bubbling under’ slot on Top of the Pops, as we were at number 42 in the charts. Gary Numan had been at 42 and then got the ‘bubbling under’ slot, went on Top of the Pops and all hell broke loose. But the slot got cut at the last minute for live football, so we didn’t get on in the end.”

The fourth single ‘Passion in Dark Rooms’ saw you working with producer Steve Levine, who went on to produce Culture Club’s first three platinum selling albums. How did you get Steve interested in working with the band?

“At his club nights, Rusty Egan used to play ‘White Boy’ by Culture Club, and it had a really refreshing sound. We went to RCA and said the guy that produced this,

> **“The deal with RCA was a half a million-pound deal”**

this is who we need. They got hold of the number for Steve Levine, they said he’s an up-and-coming producer and we’re not really going to get him, but we called Steve up and we hit it off. We went on to record ‘Passion in Dark Rooms’.”

With the momentum you were building, how disappointed were you when RCA decided not to release a debut album for The Mood in the UK?

“Yeah. The two original managers that we had, although fantastic getting us the deal, turned out to be absolutely hopeless at running the band. A label should be fighting your corner, because the bands that get recognition are the ones with someone shouting the loudest for them. We were getting a lot of play across the US, so RCA in America put out a mini-album, but in the UK the album never came to fruition. Late 82 and The Eurythmics were on the same label, with the same A&R, and they got a hit, so the label put everything behind them.”

What happened to the band then?

“Eric and I were getting more into production and writing, and signed to The Warehouse Management, but it was too late in essence, the label really didn’t get behind us. We went to Rockville Studios and changed producers again, to a guy called Paul Cobbold, but again we weren’t getting the promotion. I think we ran out of steam, the three of us. We attempted to leave RCA and sign to EMI. But somehow we never made it to EMI, and we decided to call it a day.”

So in 2024, with the help of your old producer Steve Levine, you negotiated the return of all the band’s master tapes from RCA/Sony, allowing streaming of the tracks for the first time. Did you ever think that day would come?

“Yes, I did. I think it was in 2008 Cherry Red put a compilation out, and they asked me for help to compile it. That really woke me up to there being an appetite for this. I’ve always kept in touch with Steve Levine, he’s a dear friend, and whilst working with Sony on a Culture Club release, he put me in touch with the Sony lawyer. A few emails went back and forward, and we came to an agreement to have the masters back. And when he sent me the spreadsheet from the Sony vault and I was gobsmacked because of the amount of stuff – they kept everything. All the masters and multi tracks, all the stereo mixes. A huge amount of stuff. It was amazing, like Pandora’s box. I’ve been sitting down with Steve going through it. On this one, there’s all the singles and the B- sides, I remastered all these myself. Then we’ve got a whole bunch of extra stuff, and a number of other tracks that were going to become singles and never did. We have four tracks that we did with Steve Levine, and we’re going to remix those from the ground up from the multi-track, as Steve lovingly calls ‘a reimagining’. By putting everything through modern kit, you give it a new lease of life. So that’ll be coming next and some mixes by all the producers we worked with. Those boxes were sealed forty-odd years ago, with all the handwritten notes, chord changes and lyric sheets. We’re releasing on my own label, Sugar Star. It was so great to hear those tracks in isolation. There’s all the background noises recorded in the studio and ambient sounds that bring everything back.”

credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

credit Amelia Fordyce

Through this project, have you met up with anyone else from the band?

“Yes, I have. Eric and I have always remained really close since the early days, John has given his blessing on it, but for him it’s very much a nostalgic thing. Whereas with Eric and myself we were more involved with it and we’re talking about maybe doing something live again.”

Being in a studio really fires you up doesn’t it, even after all these years?

“I love being in the studio, that’s never waned. Obviously the tech is different now, but I’m a firm believer in limitation helping the creator. When you’re held back by the limitations of the tools you have in front of you, you have to be creative, and you have to find a way of doing things. Hence why I still love analogue gear... it’s temperamental, it doesn’t always give you what you want, but sometimes it gives you something amazing you’ve never thought about. So I try to use as much real analogue as possible. Steve Levine still loves his old equipment and yeah, his studio is just like mine but on steroids!” ●

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'THE DEVIL IS AN ENGLISHMAN'
THOMAS DOLBY INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Thomas Dolby created a string of new wave commercial successes during the1980s including 'She Blinded Me with Science', 'Hyperactive' and 'Windpower', presenting his unique blend of music and science, and making geek suddenly incredibly cool. Blitzed editors Kurt and Bridget chatted with Thomas about his career...

You came from an academic family. We were encouraged to become a musician when you were younger?

"I was the first musician in my family, so they were quite chuffed. I don't think they ever imagined I would make a career out of it, but they were always very supportive. My mum asked how you get in the charts, and I said, "they do this sort of survey of a few select record shops". And she said, "just the big ones?" I said "no, it could be the little ones". So thereafter at her local vinyl record store in Cambridge, whenever I had a single, she'd go there and buy twenty copies."

Who were your musical heroes when you were growing up? Who did you aspire to?

"They were sort of diverse. Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart, Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell. I think my friends were listening to progressive rock, Yes, Genesis, Pink Floyd, and that's what we would sort of enthuse about. I remember I was at school with Shane McGowan from The Pogues, and we were sort of the rebels that would sit at the back. Shane had an incredible encyclopaedic knowledge of music. And we'd sit around in coffee bars in the afternoon, smoking, talking about progressive rock and stuff. I remember Shane coming in one day and going, "It's all s**t, it's all rubbish, The Beatles, The Stones, Pink Floyd, it's all crap!". But we were appalled. We were like, "But Shane, what should we be listening to?" And he said New York Dolls, MC5, Iggy Pop. And we'd never heard of these people, we were outraged. Six months after that, I was reading a review of the Sex Pistols at The Marquee in the NME with a similar level of outrage because Johnny Rotten spat, he swore and stormed off stage after 25 minutes. Who did the Sex Pistols think they were? And yet within another six months after that, all the old stuff was crap."

How did you arrive at the name Thomas Dolby?

"I was the first kid in school to have a portable cassette player, a big chunky thing with a shoulder strap, and big headphones. But it had a Dolby button on, and nobody really knew what this did, but they nicknamed me Dolby. My last name is actually Robertson, but, when I left school and I was trying to make it as a professional musician, I was Tom Robertson and there was a musician called Tom Robinson around already, who I liked a lot. I remember going backstage

> **the next milestone was Gary Numan on TOTP**

one day at The Red Cow in Hammersmith, saying "we're going to get confused if we both have a similar name, you know? So how about if whoever makes it first into the charts, the other one will change his name?" And we shook on it. And about three months later, he was in the charts with '2468 Motorway'. So I had to change my name, and Dolby seemed right."

When did your interest in the power of the synthesiser as a musical instrument begin?

"We used to walk up to Virgin Records in Oxford Street, where you could listen to music with headphones on, a great way to spend a rainy afternoon. I remember seeing a Tangerine Dream record and it had all sorts of analogue synths on the back. That was how I got exposed to stuff. The music papers were starting to talk about Kraut Rock and there wasn't really a UK electronic scene that I was aware of. Then, out of nowhere, Bowie went to Berlin with Eno and started making pop records entirely with electronics. I think probably 'Sound and Vision' was the first one I was aware of. That to me was the trigger of a big change. But I think the next milestone was Gary Numan on Top of the Pops doing 'Are 'Friend's' Electric?'. He was sort of the kid next door, with lots of eye makeup. But this was the signal to everybody else that anybody can do this. So you could go to Soho, to Denmark Street, where there were music gear shops that had synthesisers like Mini Moogs. If you were very lucky, they'd let you noodle with those. My first synth was a Transcendent 2000, this broken circuit board out of a dumpster, behind EMS Synths in Putney. That circuit board became part of my first synth that I soldered together out of parts. I had a friend that could model a metal fascia with knobs on it and put that together. It had no keyboard, and it would just do bleeps, and to tune it you had to turn a knob rather than play a keyboard. I lived in a bedsitter, and I had a reel-to-reel tape recorder so I could effectively overdub, recording on the left track and then bounce the left track to the right track and add a new sound. I was sort of stacking up these sounds. And meanwhile, punk rock was raging as a social phenomenon. So when I went out to pubs and clubs I would see punk bands...The Police were punks, Elvis Costello was a punk and so on. Yes it was culturally very strong, but that wasn't really the music I wanted to make. I was a decent keyboard player, playing electric piano and organ and string synth and things like that. So I started auditioning for bands that would advertise in the back of Melody Maker. My first paid job as a musician was with Bruce Woolley and The Camera Club. Bruce lived fairly close to me in South London, but he had a record contract, he'd made hit singles with Trevor Horn. This was prior to Buggles and 'Video Killed the Radio Star'. But he was already a team with Trevor, and he'd written hit songs for other artists. So I was very much in awe of someone that's actually in the business. But he had management, and he wanted to put a band together and go out and tour, and I became the salaried keyboard player in that band."

credit Carli Schultz

For us in the UK it was The Golden Age of Wireless album that brought you to our attention. Can you take us back to that time and how that album came about?

"Yeah. Well, I'm incredibly fortuitous in so many ways. I mean, just a lot of ducks in a row. I was working as a professional keyword player with Bruce Woolley, and I toured the US supporting Lena Lovich. I played synths on Foreigner tracks including 'Waiting for a Girl Like You' that had a very prominent, sort of Eno-esque ambient sense at the beginning of it. There were two or three record companies that all wanted to work with me. I told them, "I need to have my own label, and some autonomy". And EMI went for it and they did a label deal with me. Venice in Peril was the name of the label and instead of them paying me to go into the recording studio, I would come to them with a finished master. I made enough cash from the Foreigner album to pay for studio time in London, and I used some of Lena Lovich's band and some other people I knew, and I got most of the album done, on my own dime and licensed that to EMI, and they put it out. That's the first version of The Golden Age of Wireless. It came out and it got good reviews, it was up for a couple of awards and sold about three copies! I was becoming known, but there was no sign of my own commercial success yet. So EMI said 'you should start thinking about your next album, but if you want to put out a single in the meantime, we would support that.' I had started writing new material like 'She Blinded Me with Science' and 'One of Our Submarines' so they said let's do this as a double A- side, and when I did that EMI UK decided to put out a single. I made a music video for it and MTV was just starting to take off in the States. If you had a hit video on MTV, that would lead to radio play. So this is a big sea change in the US because the charts in the US are half radio play and half sales. The American company that EMI had a deal with took a fancy to 'She Blinded Me with Science' and its video, and they summoned me over there and they put a lot of money behind it, and got me on TV. They repackaged The Golden Age of Wireless, took a couple of the older songs off and put 'Science' and 'Submarines' on it, and launched it in the States, and it did very well... and so the UK company followed suit."

Is 'Europa and the Pirate Twins' a true story?

"The Pirate Twins was a kids book that I was brought up on. That was a very powerful memory for me and one of my first girlfriends, who was French, and who I hung out with when I was living in Paris. We would joke that after the apocalypse, when the world is ending, 'I'll meet you back here on the beach and we'll be the Pirate Twins again'."

How did you get involved in creating polyphonic ringtones, and how did that chapter of your Silicon Valley adventure come about?

"At the end of the 80s I sort of caught the bug of music software development and I started consulting for some of the Silicon Valley companies. It was hard work, and it might have ended up in tears, but then Nokia needed to put ringtones in their phones. Because Japanese phones were playing music, they needed to do that, so they came to us! We created the first polyphonic ringtones. Deals followed with Orange, O2, T-Mobile and people like that. It was good for a while. I think in retrospect some of those Nokia tones were rather pleasant and rather pure, you know, and there is a sort of retro interest in them."

How reliable has your gear been over the years? Have you had anything that was more unreliable than an Oscar?

"Hopelessly unreliable, and some far more unreliable than an Oscar. Henry had two little micro cassettes on the front and every song had a pair of micro cassettes. You'd slot them in, like, A then B and on a screen you type. 'Load, Return'. And little dots go across the screen for 52 seconds. And then it might say 'Ready', or it might say. 'Error'...about 50/50 chance really. So I was doing gigs with this. There was a reasonable chance it wouldn't start up and you had to flip it open and reseat all of the circuit boards. Yeah, it was a nightmare."

When you go on stage now, what are you taking with you? What's your current stage setup?

"Well, everything runs off a MacBook. I've got keyboards and controllers and pads, but they're not making any sound themselves. I use Logic Live and it was not really designed to do that. I have A and B versions of everything, and I have one of those boxes which if one of them dies, it switches to the other invisibly. An improvement on the old days!" ●

More information: www.thomasdolby.com

‘ALL THAT WE EVER HAVE’

CLAUDIA BRÜCKEN INTERVIEW

By Martin James

© Ray Moody

We're sitting in the luscious green oasis of a plant nursery hidden in the heart of one of North London's more affluent suburbs. The air hums with birdsong, clattering crockery and the chat of afternoon coffee drinkers. Claudia Brücken is contemplating both the allure and the industries of nostalgia that would prefer artists to stay on the repetitive hamster wheel of reliving past glories and saying no to future possibilities.

"When someone says 'no' I don't react so well," she says with a mischievous smile. "I get an instant rebellious attitude inside of me." The music industry likes its artists captured in aspic. Hermeneutically sealed in a 'moment' that can be endlessly repackaged and resold. We the fans become slaves to this nostalgia industry and buy into that repackaged and resold moment as a little bit of our own histories. Moments in time pinned like butterflies, each with personal meaning attached to our own experiences. We embrace the nostalgia industry because it gives truth to our own authentic biographies. And we revel in that moment in time, that period in history, that essence of the past, lost but forever retained. That moment that makes us immortal.

Claudia Brücken knows all about being placed into a moment in time. At the age of 20 the Dusseldorf born would-be fine artist joined Propaganda and before she could take a breath found herself in the glare of the media's attention thanks to a brace of perfect singles and an album of brilliance that captured the hearts of a generation of sophisticated synth pop lovers. Indeed, A Secret Wish is one of those albums that is so sonically and spiritually steeped in the essence of 1985 that even today one listen sends me hurtling back to that time. And I know I'm not alone. But that was then and this is now, as someone once sang, and much water has passed beneath the bridge since A Secret Wish stole our hearts. Claudia has since released a bunch of fine solo sets of original material, albums as Act with Thomas Leer, Onetwo with OMD's Paul Humphries, as well as collaborative releases with Andrew Poppy and with Edgar Froese's son Jerome. Never can it be said that Claudia has rested on the laurels of the first Propaganda album and been creatively shut down by industry naysayers.

We are here to chat about the here and now, not the past. The here and now is all about her latest album Night Mirror, a collection that is about being in the present and living in the moment. An approach to life that is presented with the opening words of the opening track 'My Life Started Today'. She says, "What happened before doesn't matter, it's of little consequence… With 'My Life Started Today', it's really like a mantra to myself," Claudia says. "During lockdown, well it was a very lonely place for me. I was living on my own and I was feeling quite isolated, and I got really into someone called Eckart Toller who talks about being present as much as you can be. During lockdown I listened to all of his talks on YouTube, just anything I could find, and it just made so much sense to me. It really helped me through a difficult time and somehow, I adapted to this kind approach. I even went to the Royal Albert Hall where he had a talk. It was completely sold out and it was amazing. A lot of things on the album are about that. Just being present, trying not to be a slave to your past. Not worrying too much about the future. I've adapted that way of thinking and retrained my brain I think and I'm in a much happier place now."

It's a brave new place to embrace. Toller proposes the concept of 'Presence', a state of consciousness that transcends ego and discursive thinking. Presence, he believes, allows individuals to experience inner peace, connecting with their true selves through a hyper awareness of the present moment rather than becoming dragged down by worries associated with the past, or indeed the future. Such worries, he believes, are emotionally damaging. I wonder how Claudia deals with the ever present past that faces her every day. The fans who are nostalgic for her past music, the journalists that still want quotes about former bandmates, despite her latest releases. How does Toller's philosophy work with the omnipresent nostalgia industry?

"I embrace nostalgia," she explains. "I'm not saying you should forget the past but just be at peace with it. Just like, not having those ruminating thoughts that can eat you up. It's a positive approach. "The whole thing about fans," she continues. "Well people fell in love with you then and that's how they want you to be. The music has all of these associations with their personal lives you know, with that particular moment. I think it's hard for people to accept you for more than what you were then, but you really have to go 'hey, I'm so much more than that'." Night Mirror is so much more than that. It's an album that started immediately after the recording of 'The Heart is Strange', the 'reunion' album with Susanne Freytag and Stephen Lipson as xPropaganda.

'I was keen to start on another album, but Steve wasn't ready," she says. "So John and I started working on new tracks in his garden studio and let the album grow."

credit Ken Harrison

> **“I’m a little rebel. I’ve always been a rebel.”**

John is her creative partner John Williams, who’d worked with her on the previous solo album Where Else, as well as his considerable contribution to The Heart is Strange. “This album is very different to what an xPropaganda album would sound like. It’s an album full of contrast. It’s a reflective album. It was mainly written in the nighttime, and the night can be a lonely place,” adds Claudia. In many ways Night Mirror is her most emotionally exposed album to date. I wonder how hard she finds it working so closely with a songwriting and production partner on such personal stories.

“I mean, making music this way is just something that I’ve always done,” she explains. “For me it’s a bit like a diary, you know. It’s just something that comes, because I was always a very creative person from when I was a young and even though I built my name with music and with Propaganda, which was something that was just put into my lap really, I would have probably gone into fine art which was actually something that I wanted to do. So, I think instead of being a visual artist doing paintings, I decided to express myself in a different way. I decided I would just tell stories and sing them. I was so lucky to be introduced to Stephen Lipson and to Trevor Horn, they were my first experience. That’s kind of mind blowing in a way, I had been given such an opportunity. Suddenly to work with Stephen Lipson was so much fun. Steve’s so great at bringing what’s inside out, that I’ve never felt awkward at all. It’s always been a really fun process with the producers that I have worked with. I really react to positive energy, I can’t deal with any kind of negativity. If I feel any negativity I close down, and that’s why it’s important for me to work with the right people.” John Williams is one of those ‘right’ people. “John is such a good person to work with. Throughout the process of making the album John and I often said, aren’t we lucky spending our afternoons thinking up melodies and stories, aren’t we lucky! It was quite a freeing album to work on. “There were no restrictions. We’re not trying to fit with anything or compete with anyone, because we can’t. It’s quite a freeing thing. And I’m now at an age where I can do just what I want, which is a true place of creativity. It’s the same with Susanne and Steve, we’re doing it for ourselves and if people like it that’s really nice but mainly it’s for us. “The songs are so fresh that each one means so much to me” she laughs when I ask which of the new songs mean the most to her. “I love ‘To Be Loved’ and I really love ‘Sincerely’ which is all about the groove, and the flute. I love the flute on there. And the ‘Sound & the Fury’ because it’s like young Claudia in there.”

And we’re back to young Claudia, the person that the nostalgia machine concentrates on over the older, more reflective person I’m sitting enjoying the present moment with, in this warm afternoon sun, sipping coffee, admiring the random Roman pillars and the greenery that engulfs the entire space. The older Claudia whose conversation is engaging, thoughtful and refreshingly positive. Who listens closely and replies with grace and honesty. Whose eyes shine when she smiles. Whose favorite Bowie album is Blackstar, whose favorite artist is David Hockney and whose attraction to our current location is less about the coffee shop than the abundant greenery.

“If I was no longer doing this I would probably be into plants,” she confides. “I love plants. But I don’t want to stop really. I just want to write songs and I still feel too young to stop. For me the creative process is so important. Do you think I should stop?”

Not at all. The world would be a more impoverished space without Claudia’s music and like all great artists, the creative freedom that comes with age is sure to produce the finest work, free from the confines of nostalgic expectation and existing entirely in the present moment. ●

© Ray Moody

Claudia Brücken night mirror

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'UNDER HER SPELL'

CHIBI – THE BIRTHDAY MASSACRE INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Canadian gothic electro-rock band The Birthday Massacre have enjoyed over twenty-five years of recording and performing songs they describe as "a contrast of light and dark, cute and evil". Having just completed a successful North American Tour, Blitzed Magazine's editors Kurt and Bridget grabbed a chat with frontwoman Chibi to talk about life on the road and the band's tenth studio album release.

You got together as a band in Ontario in 1999 under the name of Imagica. So what's the story? Did you all know each other?

"I met Rainbow when we were both taking an art programme in College in London, Ontario, and we both really liked writing and recording music. We started doing some cover songs just for fun, and writing our own stuff. We were just having dinner one night and Rainbow suggested we start a band. He said his old school-friend Mike was a musician and introduced us. The name Imagica was taken from a Clive Barker novel because we liked reading his books, but then we had to change that name and became The Birthday Massacre instead... and we're still doing it over two decades later."

Your first live performance was in October 2000 at Diversity nightclub in London, Ontario. Can you recall, was it a good first gig?

"A lot of our friends came out, which was amazing. They let us rehearse there, unmonitored. I don't even know why they trusted us so much, but they did. I was terrified, I didn't know what I was doing ... I still don't. I still have the same sick feeling

photo by Andrea Hunter

photo by Andrea Hunter

> **"I still have the same sick feeling before every show"**

before every show. It never goes away." We gave out forty hand-numbered demo Eps with seven songs on. I think Rainbow still has a copy, but they're pretty scarce. Sometimes people will come to shows and we're like, "Can I have a look?"

Where does your name 'Chibi' come from?

"Oh, it was an Anime reference. I used to be really into Anime. And you know how there's like either the tall, willowy classic Anime people, and then you have the little stubby ones with the big eyes that are kind of short? Those are Chibi characters. That's where I got the name.. and then I also named my cats Chibi too."

The Birthday Massacre has embraced the Internet, you've got visual content, file sharing and streaming, and fan-created content is a really important way to spread the word. How important is technology to your music and the interaction with your fan base?

"You're 100% right about the online stuff. I mean, when we started, we had a really active message board and in MySpace, you know, we're really dating ourselves here (laughs).

We toured in the UK and Europe before we really did anything in North America because we were able to reach out online and develop that audience overseas, which was incredible. But that was even before social media, right? Now, rather than go to the website, it's more like go to the Instagram, and it's more behind the scenes stuff that people expect nowadays. We have a Patreon account, where we sit down once a month and chat with people who tune into our live streams. It's very casual and it's fun, a great way to connect with people."

As an example of that fan involvement, in 2006 you had this street team in Chicago making a secret concert film as a thank you for doing the tour, and then you agreed to release it as the birthday massacre bootleg video in HD with 5.1 surround sound. Isn't it bonkers that fans will go out of their way to do something like that?

"The concert video was insane! You don't expect anybody's going to do anything like that for you. But then all these people show up saying, "hey, you've really helped us, you've affected my life in such a positive way, we've made this for you, a DVD or I made you this dog, or this painting. Our fan base are incredibly creative and really thoughtful people. They will crochet us blankets or give us little toy bunnies, make dolls or share a book of their poetry. We keep all of this stuff in our studio. You'll like this one... Because we do the VIP meet and greets, this guy came and said, "I need to show you this painting that I've done of you, Chibi". I was intrigued for sure. So, he starts slowly pulling it out of the packaging... and there's my face... and I have bunny ears and all that. It's a beautiful painting. I'm like, "oh, wow, this is great". But as he continued pulling it out it exposed these giant, obscenely large breasts! And he was like, "What do you think?" And I was like, "Great", I mean I didn't want to go, "Eww, dude!", you know, 'cos you can't! I said, "Oh wow, it's incredible." That was a little awkward. It was a beautiful painting, but why did you have to do that?"

Let's talk about the new album, Pathways. It's a fabulous work that confirms you're still ahead of the dark synth-pop and gothic rock game. How well has the album been received amongst fans and the press?

"It's been received pretty well. I try to not ever read reviews online because if anybody has anything negative to say, I will latch on to that and ignore all of the positives. So this album was released while we were on tour. It was interesting seeing people singing along to the songs that we were playing live, knowing those lyrics, liking the album, and buying the album from our merch table. Our drummer is online, he's like chronically online, so he's saying, "oh, everybody likes it. This song has the most streams right now on YouTube or Spotify" or whatever. So I think it's going really well. And we're really lucky, I mean ten albums, it's no small feat, and we're just really happy about this one too."

Do you have a favourite track on the album? Or is there a track on the album that you particularly like playing live?

"Yeah. So, on this tour, we played two of the new songs, 'Sleep Tonight' and 'All of You'. I really like 'All of You'. I really enjoyed playing it live and when we were recording it I was like, "Oh I'm getting a really good feeling off this one", so I guess I would say that one, but I like all the songs on the album."

You just finished quite a lengthy North American tour. How did it go, and do you enjoy life on the road, taking the songs out to the fans?

"Yeah, it went really well. I'm always worried nobody's going to show up at every show we ever play. We were playing some really big rooms on this tour and that was so awesome. When you're on a tour bus, you're not really sleeping, just passing out for a while, but it's awesome to wake up in another city. We have a group high-five that we all do before we go on stage, just to get ourselves amped up. I like to listen to energetic music before a show, especially if I'm really tired, so I listen to some Limp Bizkit. I get superstitious about stage clothes. If something goes wrong on stage and I'm wearing a particular piece of clothing, I'll throw it away, which is kind of weird. If I popped my knee out of joint when I was wearing that skirt on stage. Well, I'm not wearing that skirt again. Life on the road is pretty cool though, and we're coming back to the UK in the Autumn too, which we're really looking forward to".

And what are your plans now your North American tour is over? Do you have a long rest?

"We got back about a week and a half ago and I've just been trying to get some rest. But also, I've been going back to work. We're all trying to get our laundry done and catch up on sleep... and throw away those unlucky skirts!" ●

For more information: www.metropolis-records.com/artist/the-birthday-massacre

credit Neil Ferry

'THEN JERICO: TALES FROM THE BIG AREA'
AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK SHAW

By Paul Browne

Then Jerico tasted initial success with their 1987 debut album First (The Sound of Music) and became established through anthemic power pop tunes, including 'The Motive', 'Muscle Deep' and 'Big Area'. Still an enthusiastic live act, this year sees the band on the bill as part of this year's Let's Rock music festival. Blitzed caught up with Then Jerico's Mark Shaw to chat about the band's ongoing legacy.

Having touched the charts on their debut, Then Jerico leapt forward with their impressive 1989 follow-up The Big Area which peaked at No. 4 in the UK album chart. "That was probably a watershed for us, because it was the moment that we broke through" recalls Mark. "We got a lot of peer pressure from MCA Records to make it appealing to the American market. We probably compromised slightly musically, took the edges off to try and make it more appealing to America." One of the album's tracks of note is the sweeping 'What Does It Take?' which features Belinda Carlisle, a curious addition perhaps to the Then Jerico ensemble. "That was through Rick Nowels. Rick produced Belinda and co-wrote 'Heaven Is a Place on Earth' and he also produced Stevie Nicks. Stevie and Belinda had songs written for them by Sandy Stewart and David Munday, who are two amazing songwriters, and they wrote 'What Does It Take?' It's the one track we didn't write, but Rick played it to me in his car one day. We kind of wrestled it over onto our album, numerous amounts of persuasion and begging, and she kindly agreed to come and sing backing vocals. It's still one of my favourite songs and our fans seem to love it."

Many of Then Jerico's songs, naturally, have a deep, personal meaning behind them even if those meanings change over time. "Songs like 'The Motive' and 'Big Area', I actually wrote about someone that I was involved with. 'The Motive' was about meeting her and 'Big Area' was about the realisation that I was no longer

> "It was the moment that we broke through"

credit Neil Ferry

in love with her. I'm not someone that can phone it in. When I sing, I have to go back to where I was. Because otherwise I just don't have the passion. But things like 'Reeling', which was initially written about a manager who totally screwed us, that was written full of venom and angst and anger. And now I don't think about him when I sing it. It's just generally about betrayal and about disappointment at realising how shallow people can be. It's about my own naivety and just youthful anger. So I suppose that one doesn't really mean what it used to mean, because I think if I let myself go back there, I'd probably jump off stage and go and find him! (laughs)."

"I think it's a bit of a mess" suggests Mark when quizzed on the thorny issue of the modern music industry. It's a popular bone of contention where physical releases seem to be eclipsed by the rise in streaming, although Mark still sees optimism. "I think a lot of the sheer enjoyment that people used to get, that kind of visceral, tangible experience of getting something in your hand, I think that's gone. But I also think that all industries need to change to survive and the one thing that's happened with British music is that it has survived. Brexit has been a kiss of death for us, of course. Trying to tour Europe is so difficult because of all the paperwork. But I think overall there's more room for more people now. Whereas before, we were very much based upon companies that could only sign as many artists as you could get into a record shop (as record shops had floor space). Now, because of streaming and download, there are millions of artists out there. There's perhaps more opportunity for people to discover artists by themselves, because artists breakthrough on YouTube, they breakthrough on TikTok. So, it isn't just what they're being sold and marketed. You don't have to have a record company behind you, so that's got to be a positive."

Meanwhile, live performances have brought their own challenges as Mark recalls a gruesome past incident. "I was trying to stop someone throwing bottles from the balcony and onto the stage. I climbed onto a speaker to try and stop him and we had a bit of a tussle and I ended up jumping twenty feet and landing on the sprung edge of a dance floor. I shattered my heels. I'm not as mobile as I was. That presents challenges for me, because every time I come off, my feet are very painful, so I kind of drop a handful of painkillers and a handful of guarana before I go on and that's what gets me through." Touring today can also be expensive according to Mark, "you can't just sling everything in the back of a van anymore like in the old days. You can't take as many musicians as you want to. I used to have an eight-piece band and I've now got a four-piece band and it's really about trying to make sure you break even - and if you break even, then you've done really well. But other than that, I'm still up for it. And I still love every single gig I do."

"I work in various different incarnations. The shows I'm doing with Let's Rock are me with the house band. They like it 'cause when I go on early, I get the crowd going. Then I also do Then Jerico acoustic shows, which is myself and a guitarist called Ollie Brum. Ollie uses loops and I've been doing this kind of stuff for a long time before Ed Sheeran was even born! It's all created live on the spot, nothing's pre-recorded. It's just guitar and vocals and a few loops and that's it. What I tend to do at the acoustic shows is I play songs from my solo records as well as Jerico stuff, which does actually dovetail quite well into the Jerico stuff. At the time, it seemed quite different because I wasn't trying to recreate Then Jerico with my solo stuff, I was just trying to find a new sound and follow my nose as a songwriter. But when I play songs from my solo stuff together with songs from the old Jerico albums, they work as a body of work, which kind of taught me that I do have a songwriting style. Not a particularly brilliant one, but it works!"

"Then I do my full band with Magnus Box on bass, Paul Davis on drums and Ryan Williams on guitar, who are astonishing musicians. I really enjoyed playing with them, so hopefully we're going to be doing a few festivals. Then some more dates later in the year, probably towards December, I'd imagine. But going out on the road with the band again is what I want to do."

"I'm going to be writing some more stuff as well and then bring some new material into future shows. I have been writing for years, but I just haven't recorded anything and because of lockdown, where I live, it was very difficult to record in my little flat because of my neighbours. But now we have access to recording again, I'm gonna go out and start putting some more tracks down. So hopefully there'll be some new material coming out soon." ●

Then Jerico will be at Let's Rock Festival 2025. Tickets via MyTicket.co.uk

credit Ken Harrison

'TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT'

TONY HADLEY INTERVIEW

by Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Spandau Ballet arrived at the forefront of the UK New Romantic movement as the 70s became the 80s and a new music landscape emerged. The legendary Blitz Club recognised their talent and style by presenting them as the house band. Tony Hadley rose to fame as the iconic voice, fronting a string of hit singles and albums before going it alone after band tensions became too much to bear. Ahead of his forthcoming big band tour and appearance at Let's Rock Shrewsbury in July, Blitzed chatted with Tony about what's been going on in his very busy world.

Which singers influenced you when you were growing up?

"Key ones would be Freddie Mercury, Frank Sinatra, Jack Jones, Tony Bennett and Ella Fitzgerald. I'm massively into the swing stuff because my mum and dad corrupted me as a child, they force-fed me all the great singers, and then came Freddie Mercury, Bill Nelson's Be-Bop Deluxe, Rod Stewart, Elton John, Brian Ferry, David Bowie. I love a lot of the American kind of rock stuff. John Cougar Mellencamp, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty."

Can you remember the first live gig you went to as a fan and the impact that it had on you and your own music?

"Yes, that would have been Daryl Hall and John Oates, 1975 at the Apollo. I just went along on my own and some of my mates were hanging around outside, and we all got in somehow, don't ask me how, we were only 15 and skint. Of course, punk came along and that was it, I was turned on completely. The only band I didn't see in the punk era, which I really regret, is the Sex Pistols. I know Glen Matlock. I used to play football with Steve Jones in L.A. when I was living there for a while, and Johnny Lydon, who is hilarious. He's a very funny man."

How and when did you get involved with Spandau Ballet, and how did Spandau become the house band at the legendary Blitz Club?

"We were a school band in 1976. We were all originally at the Angel Islington, Dame Alice Owens was the school. Then we all moved to Potters Bar, so we all knew each other. I'm a frustrated drummer. I was in the music room at lunchtimes, practising

credit Brian Griffin courtesy MMX Gallery

“it was sweaty, it was gritty, it was wonderful”

the drums and then one day, John Keeble came in. Gary, Steve, Michael Ellison, our original bass player, and these two girl singers. I have to say, me and John did not get on at the time and he’s like, “well let me on the kit then.” I said “yeah, alright, go on then, show me what you can do”. And of course he got on the drums and he was amazing, and I was like “oh right, maybe drumming’s not for me!

I loved singing, it’s what I really wanted. I used to go and watch the guys playing and think “oh they’re not that great, they need a proper lead singer.” Steve Norman actually said they were looking for a singer, and Charlie-Big-Potatoes here said, “Yep. You’re looking at him!” I sang something, and he went. “Oh, right. OK”. So I was in! Michael Ellison was our first bass player. Richie Miller was our second bass player, and Martin Kemp in 1978 was our third bass player. Martin was in an appalling punk band called The Defects and they were defective in every way (laughs). So, eventually Martin joined the band and we were a kind of punk band. We played the Roxy, the Greyhound, we played all those kinds of clubs and pubs, and then things changed. Punk started to diminish and this whole new scene began, and we just got involved in it. You had bands like Ultravox, Kraftwerk, and that whole Berlin influence came in. Then you had Billy’s and then the Blitz Club, Depeche Mode down in Basildon, the Duran’s up in Birmingham, Sheffield had The Human League. And so the whole scene just completely changed, and we changed with it. We became the house band at the Blitz club in about 1978-79.”

What was the atmosphere like in the Blitz club? Do you have any specific memories or highlights of performing there, and did it live up to the myth?

“I can’t remember all of it, I’ll be really honest with you (laughs). Really it was just guys and girls having a bloody good time and dressing up to the nines, looking ridiculous, but super cool at the same time. If you walk down the road with a Greek shirt and Middle Eastern trousers and ballet slippers, you’ll get noticed, trust me on that one! And then Steve Strange, Rusty Egan running it. People like Chris Sullivan, there were so many people there. And then the first time we played was just magnificent. We had our own crowd there. It was absolutely rammed. It was sweaty, it was gritty, and it was wonderful. We were playing all these synth-based songs that we’d developed, arranged and rehearsed and they just sounded a million dollars. Steve Strange was hilarious. Bless him. Lovely, lovely man. He’d stand on the door, and go, “No, no, you don’t look cool. You’re not coming in”. He’d be so rude to people it was unreal. If you didn’t look right or your face didn’t fit, you were not coming in, it’s as simple as that.”

So you’ve mentioned some of the other bands at the time, Duran Duran, Depeche Mode, The Human League… Was there any competition between you, were you friends? Were you aware that you were kind of part of a new scene?

“I remember going to see Depeche Mode in Basildon, that was like ‘wow’, and we met them afterwards. We were doing a similar thing in London. They’d heard about us. So there was a kind of network without any social media or mobile phones. I don’t know how word got about back then but it did. The Human League?… I remember seeing them at the Marquee in late ‘77. Phil, I’ve known for donkeys’ years, and I know the Heaven 17 boys as well, it was fantastic. You felt there was a sort of new chapter in music after punk. I remember we were playing the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham and after that we all went down to the Run Runner Club to see the Duranies. They were so nice. We’d all heard about each other and to be honest, the competition that you hear, the nasty stuff you read about, no offence to you guys, comes from journalists and media you know. Most musicians, when they get together, like talking about music or just having a laugh, having a drink. I mean, we’ve been out drinking with Iron Maiden, Slade, the Beastie Boys, Bon Jovi, the Queen boys. So when you get together, everyone’s kind of just hanging out.”

So in 1990, after much success and many TV appearances, tours and awards, Spandau Ballet split. Was there a catalyst?

“When we were in the studio together

credit Christie Goodwin

doing 'Heart Like a Sky', a dreadful title, I said, "Look guys, we need to not record in the UK. We need to go away like we did in the old days to a residential studio, in wherever it might be, and you know, sink a few beers. A couple of nights out, get that camaraderie back in the band." And yet we ended up doing it in the UK. And it took so long to make the album and so much money, I'm not even going to tell you because it's just cruel and I think it's the worst album we ever made. I personally can't listen to it. When you watch Soul Boys of the Western World, the documentary about Spandau, it's really quite accurate. There are moments within the film where you think, 'God, dear Lord, this is a bit difficult'. You can feel the tension. We just basically drifted off and all started doing our own different things. But watch the documentary and you'll get a feel for how it was alright."

You decided you'd get back together for the Reformation Tour and gave it eight more years before finally pulling the plug again. How hard was it to walk away the second time, or was it really in your mind that was it?

"That was pretty easy. The deliberation I went through of 'can I do this again?' back in 2009 was a really hard decision for me, but it kind of worked really well. We all got on OK, we didn't kill each other, and we had some fun and it was alright. Then we had a break because you can't stay in that kind of arena style thing for too long. My ideal version of Spandau would have been to have a break, we do our own stuff, we come back together. All the lads together having a jolly and then we got together again in 2014-15 and that's when the documentary came out and everything else. And in 2017, I'd had enough. That was it, I wasn't going to do it again. I'm not going to say any more than that" (laughs)."

If you had to name one major accomplishment, personal or professional, what would it be?

"Professionally, just surviving. Because that's the toughest thing in this business. I still feel blessed. I still love music, I still have my voice, thank God or whoever is up there. I've been up. I've been down, rock bottom. I've always managed to get back up there with just sheer persistence and bloody-mindedness. Personally, having all my five beautiful children and being happy. And I'm lucky. My wife, Al, looks after me brilliantly. I'd be a bit lost without her to be honest. They're all really lovely. They're fantastic."

You're touring at the end of the year with the big band Christmas concert. What can we expect?

"Last February we did the Swing Tour and so we started to incorporate some of the songs. I thought, let's call this one the Big Band Tour, it gives me a little bit of latitude. So 'Fly Me to The Moon' and 'Mack the Knife' and all the standard classics. Then you'll get a smattering of Spandau songs. 'Only When You Leave' with the big band sounds fantastic, it sounds really massive. Then there's a Jack Jones song which has been covered by many people, who very sadly, died last October. 'The Impossible Dream', I just melt when I hear that song. So it just allows me to do other things plus a couple of Christmas songs too. A real musical journey, but most songs will have an attachment of a big brass sound."

You're appearing at Let's Rock in July alongside Holly Johnson, Toyah, Then Jerico and Matt Goss. Do festivals have a different dynamic?

"Yeah, I love them. Mark Shaw, he's a good old mate of mine. And I was with Toyah recently, she's brilliant, a little firecracker. You just wind her up and off she goes, she's got so much energy. Hooking up with Holly and Matt Goss too, it'll be good fun backstage, and we'll all have a nice little jolly for sure. The Let's Rock set-up is really good, so organised, and it's a big communal marquee. Everyone's eating together, having a beer together and a glass of wine or whatever. You walk out, there's thousands of people there, out for a good time and if the sun is shining, they've got their picnics and their beers. It's an amazing atmosphere and Shrewsbury is absolutely beautiful." ●

Tony Hadley is appearing at Let's Rock Festival 2025 in Shrewsbury.
Tickets available from:
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credit Brian Griffin courtesy MMX Gallery

‘LIVING ON THE EDGE OF THE NIGHT’ CHRIS POHL [BLUTENGEL] INTERVIEW

By Marc Massive

Credit Annie Bertram

In 2015, my band Massive Ego signed to a Berlin label called Out Of Line, specialising in ‘dark scene’ bands, catering to 80s synth, Industrial, EBM, darkwave, post-punk, futurepop, goth and rock. A kinship with the country, its people and the vibrant music scene soon formed, whilst offering my band the opportunity to go from performing in UK clubs to huge stages at festivals like M’era Luna, Wave Gotik Treffen and Amphi Festival. Based on this experience, when Blitzed suggested I interview some of the German bands from this scene, my first choice wasn’t hard: Chris Pohl, the enigmatic lead singer with Blutengel, a band that has been a leading purveyor of gothic rock since the 90s.

I asked him how his musical journey began, how he’d describe his music and which Blutengel album he’d recommend they listen to first?

“Well, it is always best to hear the current album. So you know how Blutengel is currently sounding, and it shows the musical journey. My first band, Terminal Choice, started in 1995, but I was missing the synth-pop element, so I founded a purely electronic project called Seelenkrank. Later, I renamed it Blutengel, enabling me to make purely electronic music again. For a while, both projects existed side by side, but it became too much for me to juggle, and many members of Terminal Choice left. So I concentrated on Blutengel and have tried to combine elements from Terminal Choice and Blutengel, and you can hear the references to this day. Of course, every album is a little different, but with the current album, you get the best insight, in my opinion.”

That new album Dämonen: Sturm is a hefty 25-track volume, with half the tracks sung in English, making it a perfect first descent into the band’s gothic abyss.

“The reason I sing in English is that all my favourite bands do. Besides, for us Germans, English is a nicer language to sing in. German often sounds very harsh. But sometimes, I want to sing harshly, or if I want to get a very personal message across, then I’ll sing in German.”

Chris grew up in 80s West Berlin when a wall still separated the East. I wondered how his childhood differed from mine in the North East of England, being of a similar age, I figured the choice of posters on his teenage bedroom wall might give me some clues.

“I had Samantha Fox and Sigue Sigue Sputnik! I think any musician today who grew up in the 80s can’t help but have been strongly influenced by it. The attitude to life and the music were simply incomparable. Today’s Gothic scene in particular still uses many elements of fashion from that time. And the music of the 80s is still relevant. Back then I listened to a lot of Depeche Mode, Sisters of Mercy and EBM (Electronic Body Music). At the time, that music had become mainstream and was played on the radio. Today, the same music is only part of an underground culture. My music also has a lot of 80s elements, because there’ll never be as cool a time as the 80s.”

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The reason I sing in English is that all my favourite bands do

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The Blutengel aesthetic is that of a Hammer flick with Chris's vampire-esque presence (he is 6'3, after all), giving Christopher Lee vibes circa Dracula A.D 1972. Their notorious live shows are unforgettable, more theatre than a rock show, where vampires with lesbian tendencies seductively dance between the flames of hell, unapologetically titillating whilst tastefully executed. Chris's lyrics are often a metaphor for the shunned in society, the alienated youth. His fans see Blutengel as a community of like-minded 'lost' souls, a family to which they can belong.

"I've always written about topics that interest me personally. In the past, I'd reference vampires and angels and the search for support and acceptance in the world. I'm not interested in vampires anymore, but more concerned with life itself. Letting people know that it's okay to be yourself. Never give up. Regardless of whether it's just related to gothic culture or life in general. Of course, fans see me as a leader or simply someone who understands them. That brings with it a lot of responsibility. Very early on, I received letters in which fans told me their entire lives. I still get emails saying that my music saved their lives, and that's great, but it still scares me somehow. You just keep doing what you do."

These 'children of the night' annually flock in their thousands to festivals like M'era Luna, as a sea of black clothes with exquisite make-up descends for the weekend to be part of the 'dark scene' community that Germany does so well.

"It's incredible. When there are 20,000 fans in front of the stage at M'era Luna, with everyone liking the same kind of music. Of course, not everyone likes the same bands, but the fans there are very open-minded to everything that comes out of the scene. I hope that the Gothic culture and the alternative scene continue to exist for a very long time to come."

Bringing the Blutengel circus to the UK has remained elusive, with a team of 20+ people, and the costs entailed proving a stumbling block for possible promoters. I ask Chris if we can ever expect to see them perform here for a growing fan base.

"I'd love to play in the UK. I don't even have to earn money; I just have to cover my costs. Unfortunately, there haven't been any offers from the UK that allow that."

I wonder if we might be more successful in getting Chris's side project She Hates Emotions here instead with the possibility he could perform some Blutengel material.

"Maybe it will work with SHE since we're cheaper to book. But I'll never play Blutengel songs with SHE. That wouldn't work. I'd need my band for that, and I'd have to feel like Chris from Blutengel, so it wouldn't work out."

How does performing with the two projects differ?

"Being on stage with SHE means freedom. Everything is so simple, and I don't have to worry about anything except myself. It reminds me of my early days, and I love it. Of course, I also enjoy the big show with Blutengel, but with SHE, everything is "back to basics." That's why I'm much more relaxed on stage."

Something I've always admired about Chris is his work ethic and ability to keep to an album release and tour schedule. I'm in no doubt this has helped keep him at the top of his game, but does he ever feel pressured to meet those deadlines?

"I only release an album every two years. So I always have two years to write an album. Since I'm in the studio every day, simply writing songs, I've never felt under pressure. Quite the opposite, I usually have too many songs, and then I can choose which ones I want to release. The hardest part for me is putting my thoughts into lyrics. It also has to sound good and be easy to sing. I enjoy everything else, and it comes very easily to me. Once I have the concept, I'll do the photoshoot and shoot videos. I then let myself be inspired by my songs".

Where do you look for inspiration, and when you find it, what is your process for getting it down?

"Life inspires me to write lyrics. I make music in the studio every day. At some point, I listen to my songs and try to write lyrics for them. Then I continue working on the sounds and structure of the song, and then the track goes to the producer. Musically, I'm just guided by my feelings in the moment."

I've noticed that German fans still like to buy a CD, something tangible they can hold. Being in the music industry since the 90s, Chris has seen a lot of change. I ask him about his hopes for the future of music and how we digest it.

"Music is becoming less and less valuable. My fans still buy CDs or vinyl, but their number is very small. I mourned the fact that CDs would die out for a long time, but I also have to live in this modern world and now get most of my income from streaming. But it's still not my preferred way for people to digest my music as often they only listen to individual tracks and often not in the order the artist intended, but I have to live with that. The album artwork is mostly lost when listening on mobile phones. On top of that, big streaming services are releasing AI music themselves so they don't have to pay the artists anymore. That scares me. It's becoming less about the artist and more about having cool music, regardless of who or what made it."

Blutengel fans are amongst the most loyal I've ever come across. They are also some of the most tattooed, with the Blutengel logo and 'mostly' identifiable likenesses of Chris's face proving popular. Their cars sport huge back window decals of the logo, and homes include mini shrines to their idol. That level of fandom must lead to some blurred lines.

"It's not always easy, because I also like to be able to have closer contact with my fans. Many bands sell their CDs and play concerts, but they don't care about the fans. I'm different. I'm grateful every day for everything I can afford in my life is down to my fans. Besides, I don't have many

Credit Annie Bertram

friends, so when friendships develop with people who were once fans, I embrace it. Nevertheless, I also have to set boundaries and try to keep my private life private."

I've been lucky to have witnessed first-hand how loved the band is whilst being their support band on two tours, and I have a lot of respect for Chris for championing new bands like us.

"I like to use my position and reach to help small bands. I started small once too, but no-one helped me. If a band has something to say, and I can see they live and breathe their art and make good music that feels special, then I'm happy to help. It's a hard business, so I like to be one of the good guys."

Blutengel released an album of 80s covers that included Gary Numan's 'Down in the Park', 'Ship Of Fools' by Erasure, and 'Wild Boys', which was one of Duran Duran's only German chart hits. What made these choices stand out?

"The fans often suggest them. But I only cover songs that mean something to me personally. I'm a huge Erasure fan, so I covered one of their songs. Duran Duran's video for 'Wild Boys' blew me away back then. Gary Numan is one of the pioneers of electronic music, and I found the lyrics of 'Down in the Park' particularly strange but a perfect fit for Blutengel."

As the night closes in on our chat, and a full moon lights the streets below, I question the kind of films our Prince of Darkness chooses to relax with once safely back to his crypt.

"I was and still am a huge fantasy and horror fan. Clive Barker, David Lynch, and David Cronenberg, their films inspired me greatly. Especially in my youth."

But Chris, who would play you in a biopic of your life?

"That should be Keanu Reeves." ●

Blutengel and Massive Ego play M'era Luna on Sunday 10th August 2025, Hildesheim, Germany.
For more information, visit: meraluna.de/en and blutengel.de

credit Stephen Lipson

STEPHEN LIPSON INTERVIEW

By Eoghan Lyng

It is unlikely that your ears have not been entertained by music either written, produced or performed by the multi-award-winning Stephen Lipson. His CV reads like a Who's Who of world popular music, having worked with Annie Lennox, Billie Eilish, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Grace Jones, Marc Almond, Propaganda, Robbie Williams, Simple Minds, Ultravox... the list is long and impressive. Producer, songwriter and guitarist, a highly experienced music creative held in high esteem and very much in demand. Blitzed Magazine's Eoghan Lyng was interested to find out more about this intriguing veteran of the studio... and when it all started,

"I suppose it must be forty years ago," Stephen Lipson chuckles. "A bit frightening. I'm working with Claudia [Brücken] and Susanne [Freytag] at the moment. Forty years seems like a blink of the eye." He's referring, of course, to the Propaganda debut album A Secret Wish, which was released in 1985, and boasted such highlights as 'Duel' and 'Dr. Mabuse (First Life)'. "I didn't discover them, and I don't think Trevor Horn discovered them," Lipson admits. "I believe it was Paul Morley who discovered them. How or where, I'm not sure."

It's his turn to ask Blitzed something: "Why wasn't it a hit when it came out?" Lipson sounds perplexed, because he says the record "is quite good", and 'Dr.Mabuse (First Life)' enjoyed airplay when it was issued. Lipson certainly doesn't have the answer: "Maybe people were putting their energies into Frankie Goes to Hollywood?" As a younger man, Lipson collaborated with Frankie Goes to Hollywood as an engineer and a guitarist. "Andy Richards dropped an octave on the keyboard for 'Two Tribes' which changed the whole thing, and then I played harmony on the guitar. That's how that transformed from their demo to what we hear. Andy put in some nice minor chords over it."(In an email exchange following the Zoom call, Lipson confirms "He dropped the bass note on beat 2 and 4.") "We had a four-piece band that did 'Relax', 'Two Tribes' and 'Welcome to The Pleasuredome'; me, Trevor, Andy Richards and J.J. Jeczalik." Lipson wants to know what album has endured so long, so we suggest Brothers In Arms. "That sold like a hundred billion," he laughs. Lipson quotes from the Milos Forman masterpiece Amadeus: "A film about two composers, Mozart and Salieri. Who knows who Salieri was? But he was a close runner up." This isn't padding, but a metaphor of sorts, because Lipson is unsure what artists, whether he produced them or not, will thrive in decades to come. "Possibly one or two Taylor Swift songs will endure," he surmises. It's curious that he feels this way, as there are fans who would suggest that songs like 'Relax' or 'Two Tribes' will have a long shelf life.

Lipson has a body of work going back decades. "I did the 12 inch of 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' with Trevor Horn," he reveals. Sifting through a collation of Christmas greetings, Lipson "shoved them into a Synclavier," bolstered by the sound of Phil Collins' drum patterns. This was a period of familiarity for musicians, engineers and producers. "I knew Hugh Padgham well. He lived, I believe, two doors down from me when I was working with Annie Lennox. He was working with Sting, and Sting was living two doors down from Annie. A weird coincidence!"

For a man with as many credits as he has, Lipson is grounded. "I knew Trevor

> **“I did the 12 inch of ‘Do They Know It’s Christmas?’”**

through strange circumstances, “he says, reminiscing about their first encounter. “I ended up part owning a studio at twenty-two, which had nothing to do with me having any money, because I was completely broke.” As it happens, he impressed a man “I was doing a load of sessions for”, which led to an agreement of sorts. “So, he said that we could go fifty-fifty: I would build it and run it, and he would put the money up.” It was at this studio that Horn “used to come around and play on jingles”, leading to an introduction. “That was about six, seven years before we worked together. I knew him as a session player. The person managing me in 1984 got a call saying Trevor was looking for an engineer for a couple of days.” Lipson was initially reluctant to acquiesce: “Probably because I was a failed aspiring producer, and utterly envious of Trevor’s huge success.”

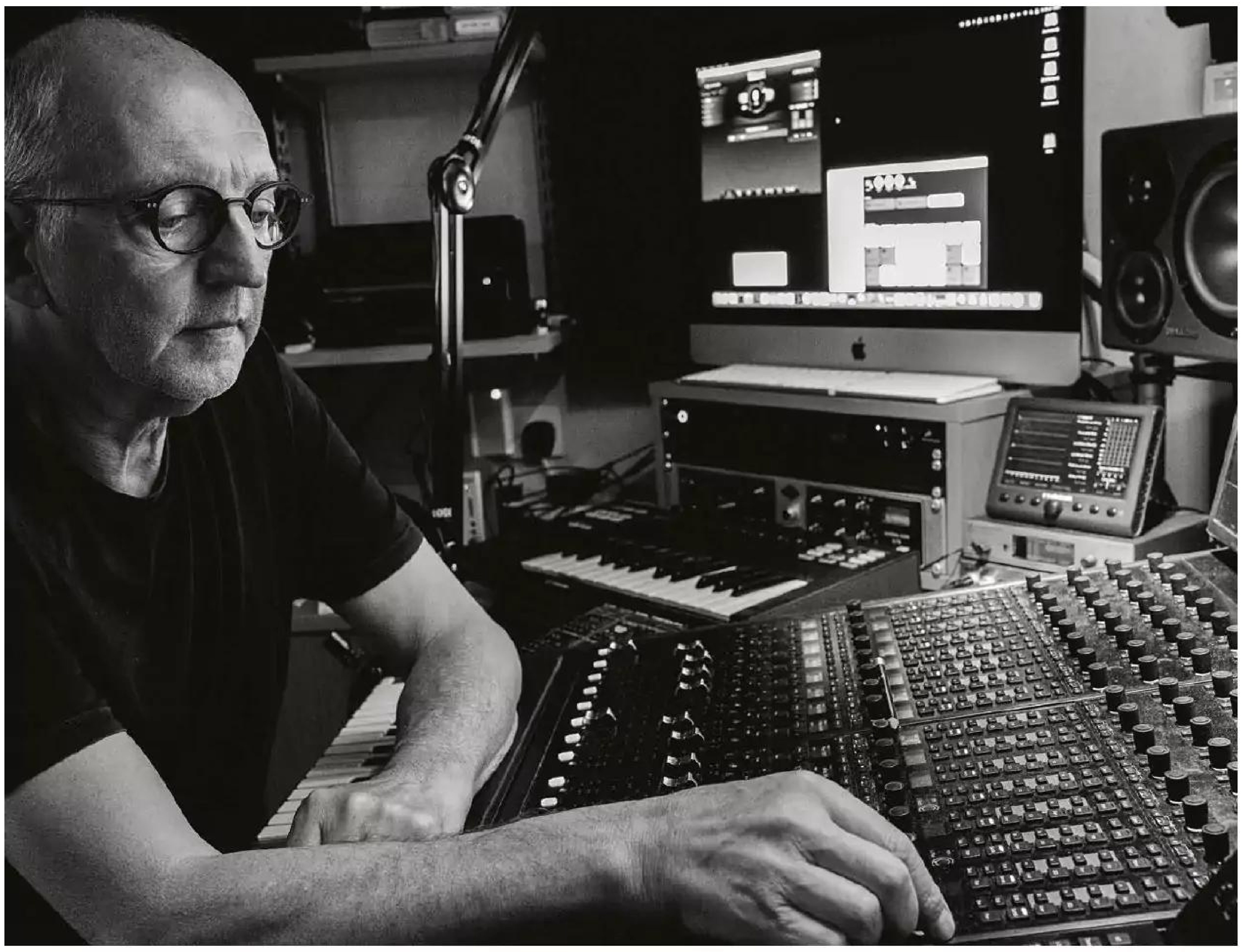
But Lipson went on the “basis that I would do whatever I wanted to do”, which pleased Horn. “He liked that I ignored everyone and did what I wanted to do. That’s what he wanted from people. And then he discovered I could play guitar, so we were up and running.”

Lipson notes that he received an “assistant producer credit” on Slave to The Rhythm; deserved recognition for his contributions. “Trevor suggested we should be co-producers, so we did a bunch of stuff together,” Lipson notes. “Then I felt I ought to see if I can make it on my own, which is what happened.” When it comes to Slave to The Rhythm, Lipson was “kind of involved” with writing the title track; “ A bit of a misnomer.” He clarifies that it was originally penned by Bruce Woolley and Simon Darlow (“The lyrics were the same for the most part”), but the version heard on Grace Jones’ record sounded “completely different”. “The music is utterly different, and the original is on the album; up-tempo, fast. Trevor and I did a completely different version, which meant inputting hugely in New York, re-writing it. And that’s how we ended up with writing credits.” Blitzed readers may recall that Jones portrayed a Bond girl in Roger Moore’s swansong, A View to A Kill. “I never met him,” Lipson says, and chooses not to be “disparaging of her”, even if Moore didn’t get on with the singer, largely because she’s “a force to be reckoned with.” “She wasn’t there for the album very much,” he points out. “The album took us about a year, and if she was there for seven hours, it would surprise me[sic]. But she did a great job, and how she got on with Roger Moore, I couldn’t tell you. Jones was a character, but she was great.”

Pet Shop Boys may have missed out on writing a Bond theme, but they did write ‘Left To My Own Devices’, a chorus-heavy ballad that was as explosive as any Duran Duran or A-ha single. “That was a co-production I did with Trevor,” Lipson explains. “They asked him, and he was working with me. So we ended up doing it together. A lot of work went into that, but it was good. A big, major labour-of-love. I enjoyed working with the guys. I think I played everything on the track, aside from the orchestra. I think it was the first time they used an orchestra.”

Lipson collaborated with Paul McCartney on Flowers in The Dirt and got on with the former Beatle. “If someone is opinionated, it can only be good news,” Lipson says, dismissing the songwriter’s reputation as a difficult customer. “Being difficult doesn’t bother me. What does it mean; having an opinion?” Surely, there was someone he disagreed with? “There was only one artist who was unnecessarily difficult,” he reveals, “and it was Whitney Houston. From what I can make out it was when she married Bobby Brown.” Gentlemanly, Lipson elects to leave it at that: “Not appropriate to go into.” Did he collaborate with Annie Lennox? “I did everything with Annie,” he replies. “Three albums, a live album, film music.” Was Lennox easy to work with? “We did four albums, so yeah; we got on really well. Musically, we were extremely compatible. It ended probably because of familiarity, but we’d done enough. A great run.”

“I don’t think I’d ever worked with an artist who controls how many takes they do,” Lipson continues. “It is not part of the vocabulary. Annie would start singing, and would stop, and say: ‘Drop me in there.’ We would do loads of bits, and I’d say, ‘Go again, and don’t worry if it goes wrong.’ She went on a load more, and then I’d put it together. Annie was figuring the song out as she went, as did a number of artists, and she didn’t know how many takes she’d done.” ●



credit Stephen Lipson

www.stevelipson.com

'INDIFFERENCE AND DUST'

ERIK STEIN - CULT WITH NO NAME INTERVIEW

By Bridget Gray and Kurt Sinclair-Hall

credit Ken Harrison

Electronic Balladeers' Cult With No Name formed in 2004 and, although initially having been welcomed into the independent electronic music scene in the UK, their music style is more complex and difficult to pigeon-hole. With comparisons to Tuxedomoon, Roxy Music, David Sylvian and Scott Walker, the affable duo Erik Stein and Jon Boux certainly appeal to music lovers with varying tastes. Blitzed were lucky to pin down Erik and chat about the new album Indifference and Dust, out on 25th July.

Is your band name a direct nod to the Blitz Club, and if so, what inspired you about the Blitz?

"Well spotted! Partly, yes. When we were trying to think of a band name, I was reading a book called 'Join Me' by Danny Wallace, which was literally about a cult with no name. I knew the reference to the Blitz Kids, of course, and seeing that we had some of those influences it felt like a good fit. One of our early reviews described our music as if 'the rat pack had been abducted by the new romantics', so it was probably a good choice."

Your new release Indifference and Dust is coming out on 25th July. Are there any guest artists on any of the tracks, and why were they chosen?

"We decided to keep this one simple. The only guest we have is Paula Gilmer from Tiny Magnetic Pets, who guests on a track called 'Clockout'. I could really hear Paula's voice on 'Clockout', and she really went above and beyond. We didn't feel the need for guests on any other track, but maybe we'll change that for album 13."

Where do you draw your inspiration from when songwriting in general, and for Indifference and Dust in particular?

"Our songs are often not about the things that people think they are, but more specific, and that's fine. Lyrics have been misinterpreted for centuries. They're a terrible method to communicate a specific message, and I'm not setting fans some kind of test to figure them out. There's no specific theme for 'Indifference and Dust', I never plan albums that way, but unsurprisingly quite a few songs are related to war, some more indirectly than others. I could go into the specific details of each, but once I start we'll be here for days."

Who is Niall as in 'Niall in the Coffin'?

"Aha! He's purely fictional! I don't even know anyone called Niall. This was a nice little pun that popped into my head. I wanted a bit of dark humour on the album, as 'X into I' felt like quite a 'straight' record. With the lyrics, I tried to imagine what Niall would have been like. He was definitely a well-liked person. Not needing to be too specific with the lyrics gave me some freedom to play around. For example, the line about the 'sky bearing down' is the lid of the coffin. I also got to rhyme 'immemorial' with 'in memoriam', which tricked me into feeling big and clever."

Thank you for sending us the CD of your new album, the artwork and in particular the lyric sheet is very striking. Who

> “we don’t play live as much as we should”

did you work with on this album for the design, and why were they the right fit for you for this album?

“Thank you very much. We’ve worked with the same designer for the past 6 albums, Leigh from Disc-Phalanx. He’s a bit of a packaging genius. The ideas to include build your own jewel case kits and magnifying lenses, as we have done for previous albums, all came from him. For ‘Indifference and Dust’, I suggested ‘Amelia’ by Laurie Anderson as an idea for what I wanted, as I really liked the cover. We’ve never had a photo of ourselves on a cover. Leigh came up with the yellow colour pallet, which he rightly pointed out was not a colour we’d used before.”

You’ve got a young family now, how has being a father changed your way of thinking and has that translated into your music?

“Finding the time and energy is definitely a big shift, but at least the ideas are still flowing. A friend of mine once said that when he had his first child, it unlocked instincts in him that he never knew he had. I don’t like to write personal songs. I think people have got enough of their own problems without hearing about mine, and what do I really have to complain about? An album of ‘first world problems’? No thanks. John Foxx once told me that when you write a song you build a model of something, which allows you to stand back and look at things from a different perspective. I think it represents what I try to do. Having said that, one or two songs have related specifically to fatherhood, most specifically ‘PTSD’ from ‘X into I’, which is about a time when my then baby daughter nearly had a very serious accident. It was my fault and it literally gave me a form of PTSD thinking about what could have happened.”

Have you got any plans to play the new material live any time soon, and are there any of the tracks on the record that you’re especially looking forward to performing?

“Our next gig is definitely a special one, as we’ll be performing with our friends Fiat Lux in a church in Bradford in September. We’ve not really thought about which songs from the new album would work well live, and we’re always a bit restricted in that sense. I reckon ‘Clockout’ will be fun to do, though. Acoustic ones are always special to perform, and I think ‘Natures of Conflict’ will work well. We don’t play live as much as we should or would like to.”

Credit Andrew J Davis

Is there any live gig you’ve played that is particularly memorable for good or bad reasons?

“Ha, well I remember the bad ones a lot more! We’ve had quite a few Spinal Tap moments in relation to gigs actually. One of my favourites is when we turned up at a pub to play a long set and there was no PA system. I protested to the promoter and he told me there was a PA system on the stage. I said “er, where?” He led me over to the stage, pointed to something on the wall and said “right there”. I said, “mate, that’s a digital darts scoreboard!”. There have of course been many great moments on stage too.”

You work with a lot of other fantastic artists, and feature on some notable releases such as the forthcoming record by Blitz legend Rusty Egan. How did you get to know Rusty and what’s your favourite Rusty story (that you can tell us!).

“I think I sent him our song ‘Breathing’ which he loved and started playing on his radio show. Then I approached him when he was DJing. Pretty soon after that he invited me to sing on ‘Welcome to the Dancefloor’ album and I did lots of PAs for him singing those songs, largely because the likes of Peter Hook, Midge Ure and Tony Hadley don’t have the availability I do! He’s been incredibly kind to us over the years and it’s great to be singing on his next album too. My favourite Rusty story? There are a lot! One of them was when we were in Dusseldorf in 2016 with John Foxx and Daniel Miller. A fantastic weekend. Rusty went out to see Daniel Miller DJ in a club and hated what he was playing. Backstage he said, “Daniel, you were just playing beats and basslines, where are the fucking songs?!” Daniel replied, “yeah that’s what I’m into now”. Rusty replied, “actually, you know what, if I had £23 million quid in the bank I’d play whatever the f**k I liked too.” (laughs).

What else have you got planned for this year?

“Promoting the album and starting the next one really. A few songs are written. We also have a special release planned for the Autumn, but I can’t reveal that now.” ●

For more CWNN information visit: https://cultwithnoname.bandcamp.com/merch

‘VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE’

TRACEY BEEHIVE – INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Melissa and Tracey

credit Kevin Westenberg

Anglo-American alternative pop outfit Voice of the Beehive enjoyed major worldwide success across the 80s and 90s including five UK Top 40 singles and two iconic albums Let it Bee and Honey Lingers. A third album, Sex & Misery, was released in 1996 with Tracey and Melissa being the sole group members. Some thirty-four years after its original outing the fabulous Honey Lingers album has been expanded, remastered and re-released, and is now available on double CD and limited-edition gatefold pink vinyl. We spoke with Queen of the Hive, Tracey Beehive, about the new release.

Along with your sister Melissa, you left your native California in the 1980s to follow your dreams of making music and made a new home in London. What was the adventure like?

“We were young and fearless. I think the most pivotal day was in California when I was waitressing at a little café in Santa Barbara. All I wanted was to be in a band and go to London. All of my favourite music was English; XTC, Madness, Adam and the Ants, Siouxsie and the Banshees. I could barely play my guitar, but I could write a decent song. I walked into work one day and Bow Wow Wow’s ‘I Want Candy’ was on the radio, and something just clicked. I calmly gave my waitress pad to my boss and gave my notice and walked out. I missed London so much after having travelled there weeks before and everything I was doing in California felt wrong. I literally just closed my eyes and jumped.”

How did you make a living and survive in a new country with few contacts and friends here?

“I was broke. I got a job working in a pub called The Three Wheatsheaves in Islington. I just walked in because they had a Help Wanted sign in the window. I made six quid for 4 hours work and they made me something to eat. It cost me half of that to get there on the tube, but I was a part of London working life. I had English friends that I had met while travelling and they let me and my boyfriend squat in a flat on Grove Green Road in Leyton. Then I got introduced to Mike Jones, a guitar player down the road, and we started making demos. Mike became crucial to the Beehive sound. The other boys and Missy would come later.”

What’s the most memorable live gig you have ever performed, and why?

“There was a gig we played at Dingwalls that I remember well. First because Dingwalls was famous back in LA for being a cool venue in London, so I really thought that we had ‘made it’. But also I had stashed all my jewellery in a little black sack under some pillows backstage, and discovered later it had been stolen. Then Voice of the Beehive was on the bill for a festival with The Butthole Surfers and Henry Rollins in Sweden somewhere. I remember showing Gibby how to smoke hash from an apple. I also asked Henry Rollins if I could get his signature. He looked at me like he was going to punch me square in the jaw. But he turned out to be civilized and I still have the signature. There was the Town and Country gig when

> **"I literally closed my eyes and jumped"**

we opened for The Kinks. I couldn't stop shaking because I knew they were in the building. But I have to admit that our reunion gig on October 4th of 2017 at The Lexington was by far the best gig we ever had. There was just something in the air that night that amped up every feeling, sound and memory."

In the Summer of 1991, you embarked on a UK tour ending with a three-night residency at Camden's Underworld. This attracted a lot of media attention due to its decadent, softcore porn theme, attendance by the Camden glitterati, an over enthusiastic audience and a raid by the local police force. Sounds like one hell of a way to end a tour!

"I think the term "Camden glitterati" is my new favourite phrase of all time. Camden really did have its own burgeoning scene at the time, and I was so in love with all of it. I just remember singing Adonis Blue to a wall sized penis from the erotic slide show. We got to hire our drag queen friends to chat everyone up and spray perfume in the air. The Orgy gig started out as a promotional gimmick, but Missy and I got really into it and had a great time. It was the one and only gig that my mom attended and she thought it was great. As far as the police raid goes...memory doesn't serve, thankfully (laughs)."

credit Simon Fowler

'Monsters and Angels' achieved a lot of airplay, particularly on US college radio, but also the video enjoyed heavy rotation on MTV. Why did the public take to that song so affectionately?

"That song just recognizes that there are all kinds of ways to navigate the world, and it pays to recognise that everyone has contrary parts that add up to make us whole. I always feel that when someone hears a sentiment that they relate to, they feel less alone and if you put it to music that enhances it, then you have the soundtrack to a specific emotion that you can access and have at your command. (It's also got a catchy chorus)."

'Perfect Place' is one of those songs that fans instantly relate to. Very much an introspective work riding on a classy melody. What was the story behind the song? Is it based on personal reflection?

"'Perfect Place' came about because I'd seen an older man eating by himself at a café and I just felt broken-hearted for him because he was alone. It occurred to me that no matter who you were or what you did, you'd never be able to cure the plight of loneliness. So, I wrote it from the point of view of a girl who's admitting that she can't really change anything or alleviate anyone's pain, and she'd have to be okay with that or there was a rough road ahead. But, on a happier note, it also recognizes that if we all tried a little bit, it was in our power to make this a kinder and softer place to be."

So, the fabulous Honey Lingers album has been expanded, remastered and re-released some thirty-four years after its original outing and is now available on double CD and limited-edition gatefold pink vinyl. There are previously unheard versions that map out the band's journey to finding their signature sound, B-sides and live recordings. The album comes with new sleeve-notes by yourself talking about the project. How involved were you in the creation of the release package?

"I'm so happy to say that this was a labour of love and London records have been the best. I loved writing the liner notes for both this and Let It Bee and everything was run by my sister and I. We both really love this record, and it was lovely to watch it see the light of day again."

Do you have any personal favourites from the Honey Lingers album?

"I'm really partial to 'Adonis Blue'. I love the fat and delicious production of it and I love the sentiment of being able to assemble the perfect man with little bits of all the men you know and love. What a concept for a video!!! Missy was always a huge fan of 'Just Like You'. I just love her vocals on that song. She's so animated, like only she can be."

What are your plans for 2025 and beyond?

"Have you seen the state of the US? Do you see who is 'running' the country into the ground? My plans are to try to keep breathing and just get through it... or as the dear Brits say, to Keep Calm and Carry On." ●

'HEART OF A MACHINE'
IAN WALL INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Blitzed features the best tribute and cover bands recreating the sounds of your favourite artists

In We've Got You Covered this issue, we talk to Ian Wall of top Midlands-based covers act SYNTH.

Credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

> **I was disillusioned with some of the attitudes**

There has always been a rivalry between bands writing and performing original music, and tribute acts and covers bands performing the works of others. Birmingham-based artist Ian Wall has one foot in both camps, being both the frontman of electronic rockers Among the Echoes as well as the electronic covers band SYNTH. In addition, Ian heads up a group of companies that includes The Rhodehouse live music venue. So he has a unique perspective on the independent music scene in the Second City. Blitzed was interested to discover how he keeps all his balls in the air!

When did you first start to take notice of music in the charts and which artists were the ones that really spoke to you?

"My parents used to play Country and Western music at home. And then my Nan actually used to get up and sing in the pubs, a lot of Al Jolson and things like that. And I would go, "wow, how can you do that?" The different reference points in my life will always come back to my Nanny Violet. We were very fortunate to live through the late 70s, early 80s and the different fusions of what I remember coming after the invasion of punk. We experienced the back of disco, the brash but brief punk era, and then the New Wave and New Romantics. I became very inspired by Ska and Two-Tone and became a massive Madness fan. But I have a very eclectic taste."

Was Among the Echoes your first band?

"No, my first band was called Society. And yeah, there is a video on YouTube somewhere (laughs). There were a couple of formations, and we did actually demo three songs, two of which we put onto a 7-inch vinyl, and I have had them converted into MP3. I still enjoy them."

So was it 2013 that Among the Echoes got together? How did that come about?

"Yes, it was. It was me reminiscing about the memories I enjoyed about my Nanny Violet, and feeling that I hadn't completed that journey. I booked a lesson with a vocal coach and said, "find whatever voice you can find, I don't care what it is, I just want to perform on the stage". And after a few conversations with friends, someone introduced me to Rachel and we wrote a few songs online. We had a rehearsal, and she introduced me to Steve Turrell. Then we tried a couple of different members with the band. I think Phil Lockhart had joined by then, he added something new with his bass style and character. Me being me, I then announced that we had booked some gigs. We went to Rich Bitch Studios and did a demo of a couple of songs, and the sound engineer for the day was Sam Wale. Sam did the recordings and then came along to our first show at The Actress and Bishop. He said, "I don't want to be in the audience, I want to be on the stage". So four weeks later we were at The Flapper doing another gig and Sam was in the band. Rachel had other commitments with a Rock band, so we changed the lineup, and in 2014 it all kicked into place. We released the 'Freak' EP followed by the 'Midnight' EP, and then straight into the next year with 'Sin' and Fracture. So, it all evolved quickly. Seeing Gary Numan live with Steve and Sam from Among the Echoes, I thought this sounds like stuff that we're writing. The following day we discussed covering 'Pure', literally because on the night we all looked at each other and went, "that could be an Echoes track". The journey we went on was amazing, we got to play some nice gigs and went on tour with The Birthday Massacre. Also the recording of the album where we re-recorded the singles as well, we literally decided that concept and delivered it all within three months. It was a very successful album launch, and I still listen to that album now and

Credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

I'm very proud of it."

After three singles, three EPs, one album, and quite a few gigs around the UK supporting Toyah, The Birthday Massacre, B-movie, gradually the band wound down. What happened?

"I think we went through 15 members in total. Some people wanted to use the band as a vehicle for themselves. I was quite disillusioned with some of the attitudes of people who were either reviewing or monitoring the independent music scene. The last show we played was the original lineup with Sam and Phil and unfortunately Covid kicked in the week after, and then the world stopped. We're only a small band and we have a nice little following, but to regenerate that interest and energy again, I'm not sure. Since then we have recorded over twenty songs. There are some songs I'd still like to play again. I enjoyed performing with the lads and I'd like to hear the reaction to the new songs. I had some conversations with them quite recently, because I said I would only do it with the original lineup and all four members would do it."

With Among the Echoes shelved, you joined up with Dave Adams and Richard Broadhead to form the electronic covers band SYNTH. What was the reasoning or motivation for that?

"I was working with Steve on putting some covers together for a new gig for Among the Echoes. Steve suddenly said, "I think this is not me. I've never wanted to be in a cover band. Sorry." I hate cancelling gigs, but there's no way we could go ahead with this. Dave only lives round the corner from me. I knew that Dave used to perform in a lot of Mod bands over the years, and we just got into a conversation one day about electronic music influences. He said how do I feel about just going down the studio and having a bit of a jam. I found out Dave was also a massive David Sylvian fan. So we went to the studio and played a bit, and, Ian being Ian, I started to talk to people about booking gigs! We were in a rehearsal, and I had a message from Richard, who was still playing with Mesh at the time. He wanted in also... Richard does love the programming side of the music and does a pretty good job of it. There are songs that we said from day one we would never do... 'Vienna', 'A Little Respect', etc... but then they became part of the set, because if you want to make this a successful project, and it has been for us, there's got to be a compromise. We're just freshening the band up a little bit at the moment and added a new member, Simon Horton. The job that I do today came out of speaking to the owner of a venue where I was performing. We were just talking about different things and we kind of hit it off. And then two years later, we're having a conversation, and I've kind of moved over to heading up the group of companies that he owns, including the Rhodehouse music venue. So interestingly, a cover band project influenced my own career."

You have toyed with the idea of doing a solo project for many years, is there any possibility that that might happen?

"Well, there is a song written. Steve created the music for me and the arrangement, a beautiful piece of music really, and I wrote the lyrics for it, very personal words. I've been saying for months that I will go into the studio and record it. I wouldn't mind doing a solo album at some point, but would anyone want to buy it? I keep parking it. But I'd want to have complete input into the whole thing. You see, I love writing. That's the one thing about SYNTH doing the covers, I miss the writing, but there's always a notepad close at hand to write down ideas. And I've never written a song with you guys, I'll let you know what my rates are!" (laughs). ●

‘YOU CAN DANCE IF YOU WANT TO’

IVAN DOROSCHUK - MEN WITHOUT HATS INTERVIEW

By Darren D. Danahy

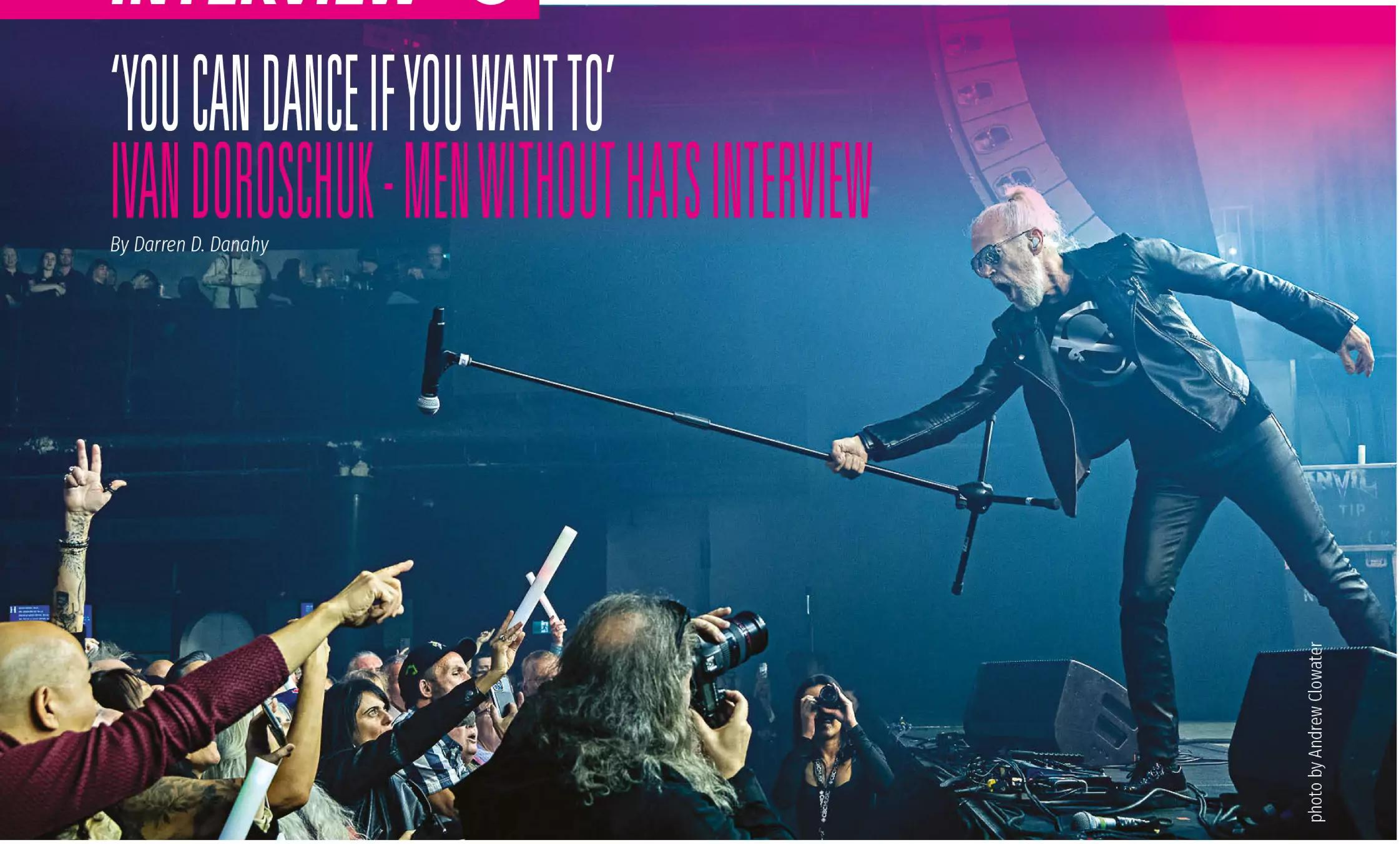


photo by Andrew Clowater

Canadian new wave band Men Without Hats took the pop world by storm in May 1983 with their wildly infectious hit ‘The Safety Dance’. After eight albums and a number of personnel changes, Ivan Doroschuk has remained at the helm of the band. Blitzed Magazine’s Darren D. Danahy recently chatted with Ivan about the forthcoming UK and European tour and the next album.

Men Without Hats was formed in 1977 as a punk outfit. In 1980, you rebooted the band as a synthesiser-based outfit. What was it that turned you on to use electronics in music?

“Well, I took piano lessons all my life, and I was a big prog rock fan. I loved the bands Genesis and Yes, and bands like that. But I was a big fan of disco too. I’ve always said that new wave music was a combination of prog rock and disco, it was synthesiser music you can dance to. I just figured it would have more mileage than a noise guitar outfit, so I went the synthesiser route.”

Was it difficult to book gigs with this new electronic sound at the time?

“Not really to be honest. There would be new wave bands and punk bands all sharing the same stage. There was usually one place in town that would take a chance and book bands like that. It was exciting times, everything was new, everything was changing.”

Well, the band had been through some changes in lineup before putting out the Rhythm of Youth album in 1982, and then they had major success with ‘The Safety Dance’ in 1983. Was that a surprise for you, or did you have a feeling about that song all along?

“I’ve got to admit that when you’re a young songwriter, you think that everything you write is destined for stardom and you can’t understand why people are just not lining up to throw money at you. We were in the studio recording the follow up album when the dance-mix hit number one on the Billboard dance charts, and we were yanked out of the studio and thrown in a bus and sent off to promote the Rhythm of Youth album. We were just stoked to be getting a chance to make a follow up record.”

The following album, Folk of the 80s Part 3, didn’t achieve that same international commercial success of the first album. Why do you think that was?

“Well, there’s a lot of reasons I guess.

photo by Andrew Clowater

> **There would be new wave & punk bands sharing the same stage**

There's a book out called The Hit Men, which is almost my story. It's the story about the West Coast record companies and the East Coast record companies and the sort of payola scandal that was going on. It was just a lot of politics. A lot of naivety, with a band that has just been thrust into the limelight. We were actually dropped by our LA record label right after 'The Safety Dance'. That's the politics of the industry and that's just how it goes."

The band went through some more personnel changes and then you followed up with Pop Goes the World and then The Adventures of Women and Men Without Hate in the 21st Century and you focused on more serious subjects, getting back to enjoying a bit more worldwide acclaim at that point. Along with that came more touring and promotion. Do you enjoy that as much as you enjoy writing these songs?

"I love being on the road. I love performing and so that's why we're still out there now. I'm blessed that people are still listening to our music and it gives me the chance to get out there and play it for them and connect with them. It's a big part of it. It's something that I really enjoy doing."

In 1991 you went for a more guitar-driven sound with the Sideways album, and Polygram wasn't having it. What caused this change in musical direction?

"The whole industry was changing at that point. I was hanging out with a lot of young punk musicians again and we just wanted to try something else, but the record company wanted The Son of 'The Safety Dance' and The Return of 'The Safety Dance' and so on. It was just before Nirvana broke big, and they didn't really understand what was going on. Actually, they're kind of always the last to know but we had a great time with that album. We toured Canada and it was really fun."

In 1993 you disbanded, for 10 years in fact. You got back for a year in 2003 and released No Hats Beyond This Point, and then you took another break for six years until you re-booted, with some more changes in personnel. The media were courting you again and you went back to the new wave sound at that point. What is it that contributes to Men Without Hats' longevity and what holds you guys together now?

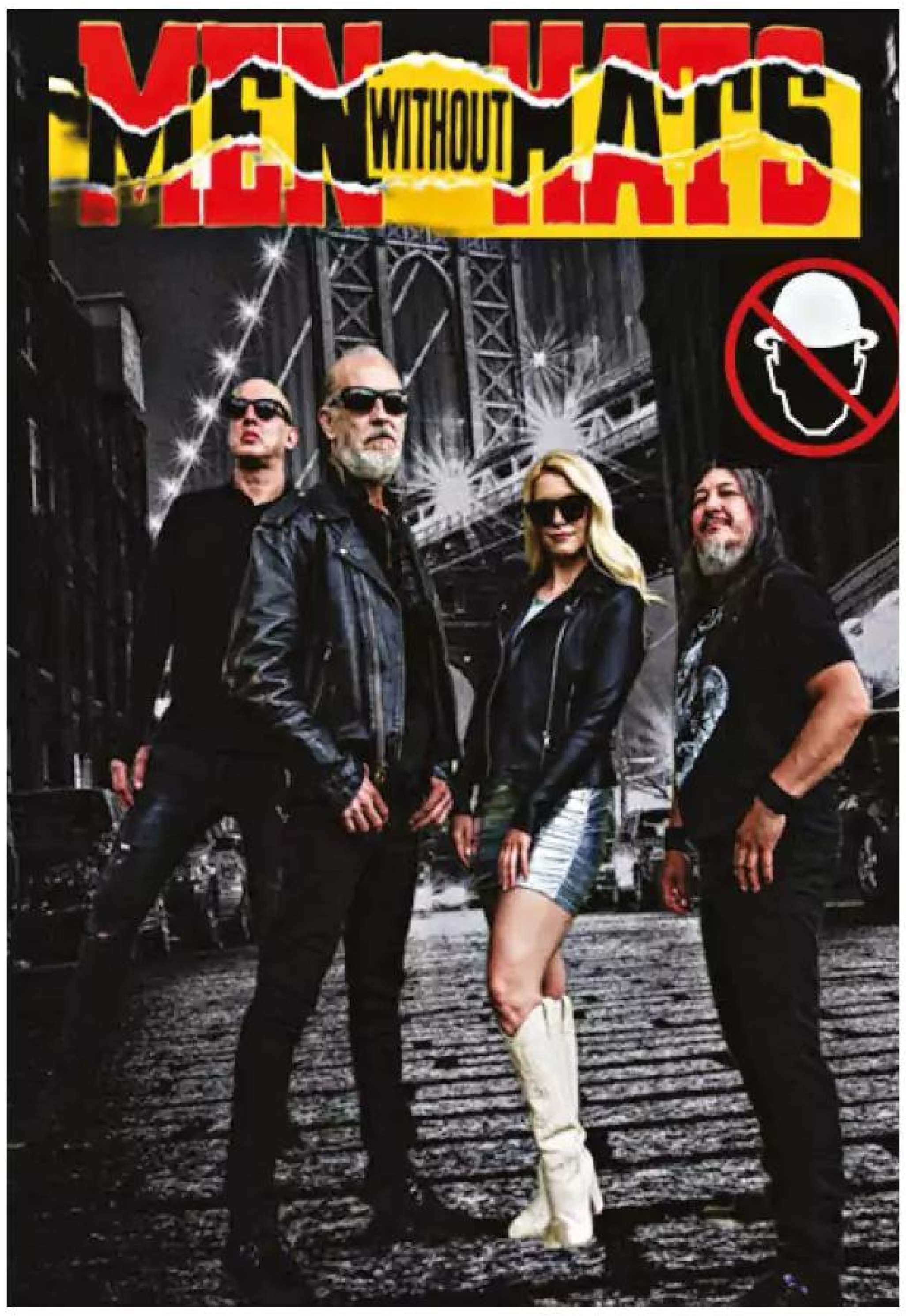
"I think that first of all, the message of 'The Safety Dance'... people still need to hear that they can dance if they want to (laughs). And also the fact that there's a lot of 80s revival in the sound of pop music today. I hear a lot of influences in contemporary music, I hear the big drum sounds, the synthesisers, the robot voices. They seem to be lifting a lot from the 80s."

You've been busy with writing, recording and performing since that point. Following a successful tour last year across the US and Canada, you played the Totally Tubular festival with Tom Bailey and Thomas Dolby and others. Now you've announced the 2025 UK and European Tour coming up. How excited are you?

"Oh I'm very excited. It's been a while since we've been to Europe and the UK, and Scandinavia also. We're stoked and can't wait to get over there. The Europeans have been asking for us for a long time, so it's always an honour to go over there and play for them."

I'm sure all the readers in Europe are going to be really excited to see you. It is a very exciting time to have this revival going on, especially for me, it's my generation of music too. Can you tell us what your song-writing process is like?

"I know it's a craft and people have different ways of approaching it, and different techniques. And I usually let it sit inside me for a while and then just pump out 5 or 6 songs all at once. That's how I usually do it."



What can we expect to see or hear from Men Without Hats next?

"Well, there's the new single of course, and an album following that in the fall. We keep busy, and it's been fun. It always is."

What's been your most memorable moment or live gig and what made it stand out for you?

"One of them was receiving our gold record for the Rhythm of Youth album at a concert at the Palladium in New York City, and the guy who presented us with the gold record was Mark Gastineau from the New York Jets. Pete Rozelle, the Commissioner of the National Football League at that time, had banned celebrations like dancing after a play, because he didn't want the games to run overtime on TV. But Mark Gastineau just said "no, I can dance if I want to". And every time you would sack a quarterback, they would play 'The Safety Dance' and he would do his thing. So he came on stage and presented us with the award and also presented me with one of his jerseys, it was quite memorable."

Tell us about the new album coming out in the Autumn.

"It's an eight-song album. It's going to contain the new single that we have. It's called Men Without Hats on the Moon, and it's seven original compositions, and a cover of 'Jealous Guy' by John Lennon. I'm a big John Lennon fan. I share my birthday with him too, which makes it even more special for me." ●

MEN WITHOUT HATS

2025 EUROPEAN TOUR

21/08/25	LEEDS, UK THE OLD WOOLLEN
22/08/25	EDINBURGH, UK FRINGE FESTIVAL
23/08/25	LIVERPOOL, UK ACADEMY 3
24/08/25	MILTON KEYNES, UK CRAUFURD ARMS
25/08/25	LONDON, UK GARAGE
27/08/25	UTRECHT, NL DE HELLING (+THE ESSENCE)
28/08/25	HEERLEN, NL NIEUWE NOR (+THE ESSENCE)
29/08/25	TRIER, DE MERGENER HOF
30/08/25	RÜSSELSHEIM, DE DAS RIND
31/08/25	GÖTTINGEN, DE EXIL
02/09/25	MUNICH, DE FEIERWERK
03/09/25	KARLSRUHE, DE DIE STADTMITTE (80'S PARTY)
04/09/25	HAMELN, DE SUMBPFBLUME
05/09/25	BOCHUM, DE TROMPETE
06/09/25	LEIPZIG-DEUTZEN, DE NCN FESTIVAL 2025
08/09/25	BREMENHAVEN, DE SHIVA
09/09/25	HAMBURG, DE MARKTHALLE @ MARX (+TWIN NOIR)
10/09/25	BERLIN, DE LIDO (+TWIN NOIR)
11/09/25	KIEL, DE DIE PUMPE (+TWIN NOIR)
12/09/25	COPENHAGEN, DK HOTEL CECIL
13/09/25	GOTHENBURG, SE MUSIKENS HUS
14/09/25	STOCKHOLM, SE SLAKTKYRKAN @ HUS 7
16/09/25	OSLO, NO JOHN DEE (+PISTON DAMP)
17/09/25	MALMÖ, SE BABEL

MEN (WITHOUT) HATS
I ♥ the 80s

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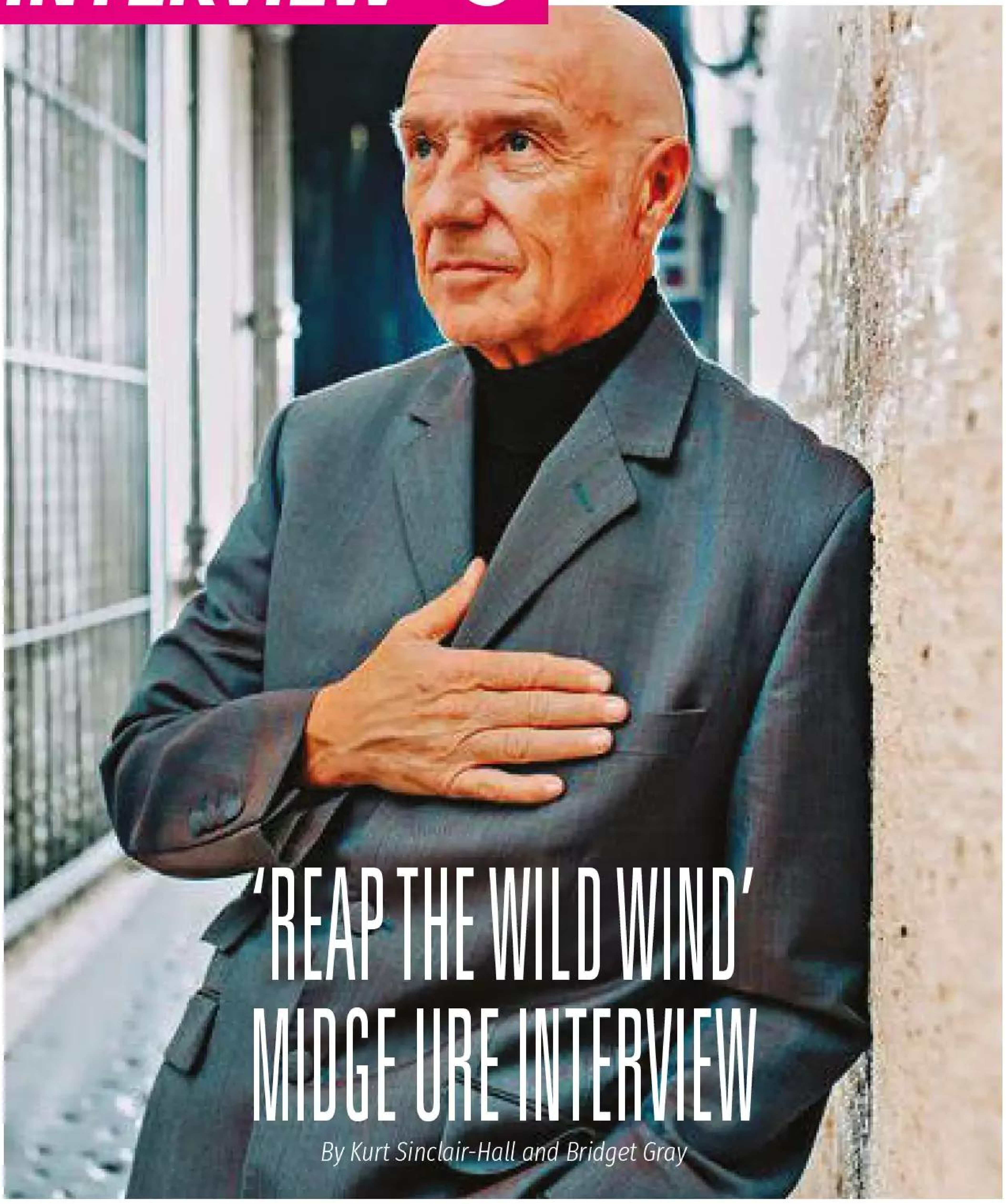


credit Nathan Roach

'REAP THE WILD WIND' MIDGE URE INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

credit Ken Harrison

Midge Ure is one of Britain's most recognisable singer/songwriter/producer/performers having key roles in a variety of bands with growing success from Slik, Rich Kids and Thin Lizzy, to becoming a driving force behind the music of New Romantic pioneers Visage, electro-rockers Ultravox, and now a solo career creating albums and touring the globe. Midge also finds time for his incredible charity work, being a founder of The Band Aid Trust and Live Aid, amongst many other worthwhile organisations. Blitzed Editors Kurt and Bridget were delighted to spend a couple of hours in Midge's company, and we present part one of a two-part interview.

After your UK number one with Slik, ['Forever and Ever', which reached number one in the UK Singles Chart in February 1976] it was with your next band Rich Kids where you started to discover synthesisers. How did you get to link up with Glen Matlock, Steve New and Rusty Egan?

"It was via a journalist named Caroline Coon, who wrote for Melody Maker. She had seen Slik play live and although Slik were tarred with the same brush as the Bay City Rollers, they were a proper band. She knew Glen via the Sex Pistols and the Clash, and he had been looking for this mythical 4th member. Mick Jones from the Clash had played a couple of Rich Kids gigs with them while they were looking. And so Caroline had suggested that I was the guy to fill that spot because she was quite taken with what Slik did. It just came out of the blue, like these things do, you know, they trace you down, the telephone rings and they say, "what are you up to?" Well it was Glen, and it was during the final death throes of Slik, so he said come on down to London, hang out for a couple of days and see if we get on, see if it all works. On the first day that I arrived we rehearsed three songs, we went out that evening and we opened up for The Police and the Angel, Islington. And then we opened up for The Boomtown Rats, we just blagged our way in and got on stage and played the three songs we learned that afternoon. Then we went to a warehouse party where it was all The Clash and Siouxsie and the Banshees, and all the people I'd read about were there. But it was me who introduced the synthesiser into the Rich Kids, because obviously Rusty and I, both Rich Kids, were listening to lots of music that was coming out of Europe at the time. Rusty had just started running Billy's, which was a forerunner to the Blitz Club, and had started playing a lot of this synthesised stuff that he was finding throughout Europe. Through a big disco PA system it sounded stonkingly good. I had seen Tomorrow's World on the TV, where they had a guitar that made sounds like an organ which fascinated me. I bought a synthesiser and brought it into the Rich Kids, with this idea of merging this electronic thing with traditional guitars and stuff. And it wasn't to be. Half the band hated it and didn't see the point. Rusty saw the potential and I took the

> **"we were neither a punk band nor a pop band"**

> I might have foreseen the John Foxx backlash

credit Kate Southall

synthesiser and developed the idea of Visage.”

Is that the point where Rich Kids came to an end?

“It kind of did, it ground to a halt at that point. There was obviously a massive divide between what the band had been doing and what I wanted to explore. We fell on stony ground when you think about it, because we were neither a punk band nor a pop band, and I think the music media termed this ‘power pop’, which is horrendous. Glen was very much what Glen still is now, he’s a real kind of rock and roller. He loves playing pubs, it’s all a bit loose and I was a bit more meticulous and wanted things produced properly. It just led to a big divide, and obviously the synthesiser was not going to heal whatever split was happening within the Rich Kids.”

What was it like stepping into John Foxx’s shoes with Ultravox, and how did that opportunity come about?

“For me, musically it was very easy. I think had I been more aware, I might have foreseen the kind of John Foxx backlash. You know, the hardcore Ultravox fans hating this guy who had just come from a kind of thrashy pop rock joining their heroes. But musically it was very exciting, it was phenomenal. When I first plugged in and made a noise with Ultravox, it was like fireworks going off in my head, all cinematic and soaring through the skies. I felt as though I’d found my home.”

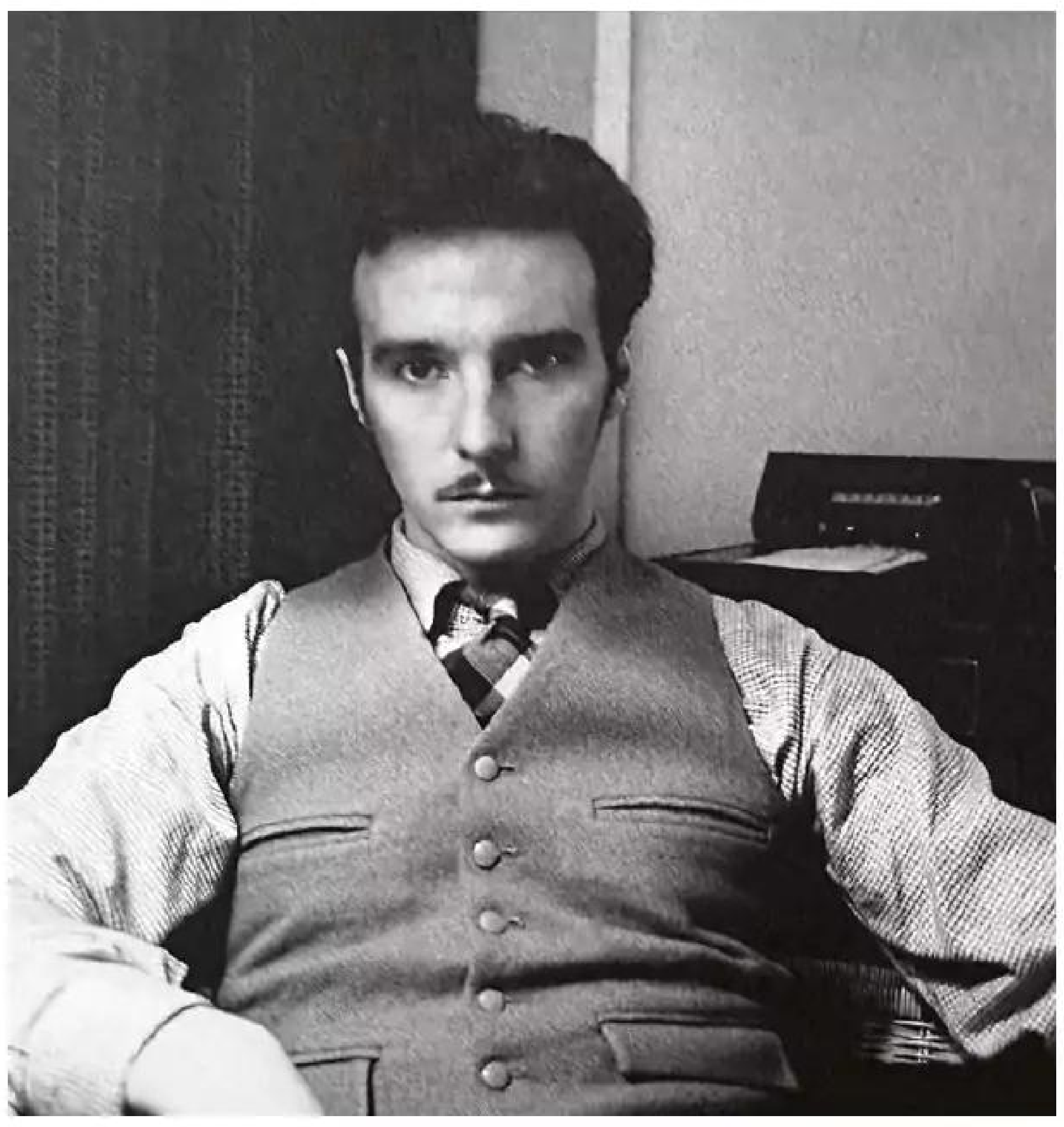
You became involved with Ultravox, Visage and Thin Lizzy in a fairly close time period. With three bands that must have been a real balancing act for recording, rehearsing, and touring?

“Well, again, none of it was planned. You could sit down with a big sheet of paper and write all the things that you’d like to happen, but life gets in the way. I had met Philip Lynott when I was still living in Glasgow playing in a band, even before Slik, so I already had a kind of connection there in London. But I never ever expected he’d call me up one day and say, “can you come over to America and finish this tour with us”. The Visage thing came first, from the dying throes of the Rich Kids. Visage grew out of that, because of what Rusty and I were trying to do, trying to just work with our favourite artists, Billy and Dave Formula and Barry Adamson and all the guys from Magazine and stuff. We were still three live touring bands. The Rich Kids still existed. Ultravox still existed in that format, and Magazine still existed. We were touring all the time, so to try and get the odd handful of moments you could get together to start writing this stuff, was kind of difficult. It took nearly a year to compile the ideas and the recordings and snatch studio time, before we actually finished the album. By which point I joined Ultravox, so it was just this weird irony that the Visage album and the Vienna album came out at the same time. I was sought after as a producer and you think, how can that change like that in the space of 12 months, from being absolutely invisible to being the centre of this hurricane? It felt like we were spearheading something new. The reality was no one was doing it at the time. Gary Numan had jumped on the tail of early Ultravox. Ultravox had been doing it with the stuff they did with Conny Plank and the Systems of Romance album that was really getting somewhere incredible, but it hadn’t really latched on at this point, so it felt as though you were kind of steering the ship at the very front of a fleet that was about to come through and eventually overtake you.

At that point I wasn’t interested in trying to write 3-minute pop songs to get on Top of the Pops. We wanted to write something that was creative and interesting and diverse, and something that felt as though you were swimming upstream, against what was going on, and that’s what it felt like at the time. Nobody saw ‘Vienna’ becoming the big success that it did because it was the antithesis of what you would get played on the radio. So it was again luck, being in the right place at the right time. Many songwriters and producers over the decades have said if they knew what made commercial success, they would bottle it and sell it. None of us know what the public’s going to like. None of us know what radio is going to play. All you can do is make something that you’re proud of and hope that it gets to some ears, somewhere on the planet that helps them through a shitty moment or, you know, makes them feel happy or makes them feel different about themselves or others. That’s what you do it for.”

Can you remember the first time when you met the enigma that was Steve Strange, and what did you make of him?

“I don’t really remember the first time. I probably met him in Billy’s on a Tuesday



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night or Thursday night or something. He would have been there with Rusty and you just kind of got to know everyone as you went along. It was Rusty who said, "oh my mate Steve is in a band, he'd love to do the vocals", because in reality Rusty and I were talking about music. We were talking about musicians. We were talking about wouldn't it be great to be in a band with Billy Currie? and have that sound... wouldn't be great to have these guys from Magazine. And so Steve was almost an afterthought... "Oh God, we need a vocalist". I didn't want to sing. I didn't want to have my voice all over it because I'd already got Rich Kids at the time, and eventually had Ultravox, so I didn't want to be the face of a new band. But Steve brought much more than just any vocalist would have brought, he brought that enigma, he brought that fashion, and he brought that connection to that particular world of the fashionista, the stylish, and it was a good moment when Rusty opened his mouth and said that."

How do you feel about Visage now? When you look back, do you think it could have become a much bigger force within the music scene? Obviously there's a lot of water under a lot of bridges now, but can you look back fondly on Visage and what you achieved?

"You know what, it was a great idea. In some ways it was like Gorillaz before Gorillaz were around, it was a band that was never a band, it was a studio project. It was creative and it was exciting. For me, a major part was to be allowed in the studio to do what I wanted to. So to sit there at the desk, doing this 12 hours a day or whatever it was. But Rusty would float in with Steve every night for an hour before going out to some club and, you know, play air drums and then disappear again. But I was actually relishing the whole thing about being in the studio, producing this, working on that. So I've got nothing but fond memories of Visage. It's not until later on that things started getting sour, where the inevitable slightly inflated egos would raise their heads, and it just turned into a kind of tabloid nonsense and the music was forgotten. I think the second album was superior to the first album, but then it became all fluffing nonsense. It was all tabloid tittle-tattle and the music became secondary. And that's when, as legend has it, Steve got on the camel's back in New York, and I just walked and I said, "that's it, I'm done". You know, a camel in New York City! I'm having nothing to do with this. Just imagine, Steve turning up in the rain with his makeup running down and the camel shitting all over the pavement in front of all the media! (laughs)." ●

Part Two of the Midge Ure interview is in the next issue of Blitzed Magazine.

Find out more about Midge Ure at www.midgeure.co.uk

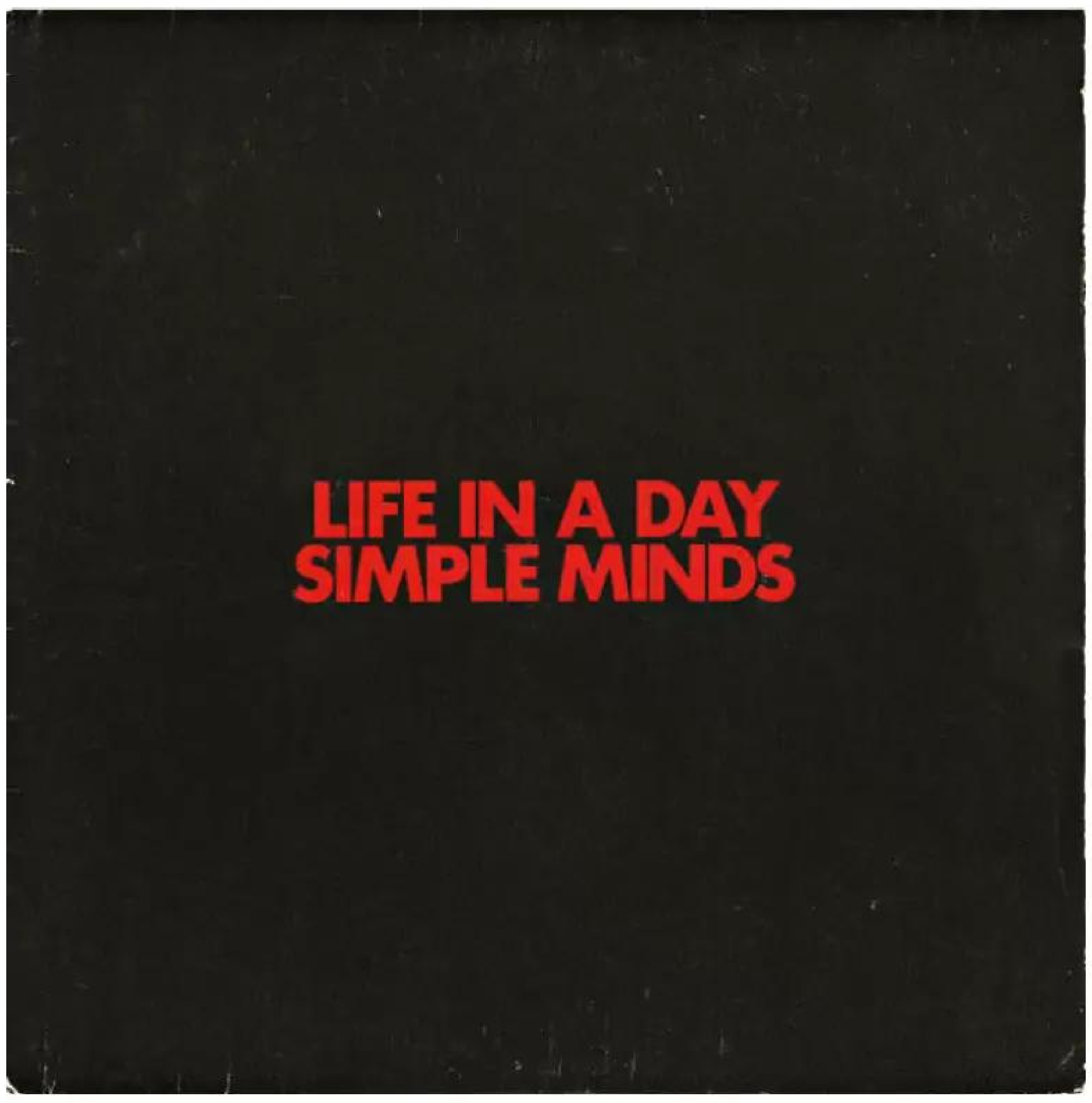
credit Brian Griffin courtesy MMX Gallery

LISTENING TO THE MUSIC THE MACHINES MAKE

INSIDE RUSTY EGAN'S BLITZ CLUB PLAYLIST

by Richard Evans

Inspired by Blitzed's ongoing mission to celebrate the best of Blitz culture from Steve Strange and Rusty Egan's legendary club of the same name, Richard Evans - author of Listening to the Music the Machines Make - Inventing Electronic Pop 1978-1983 (Omnibus Press) - brings us the stories behind some of the songs from Egan's soundtrack to those times.



I've been listening to a lot of Simple Minds recently. Not the commercially successful stadium-era Simple Minds, although I also love those songs, but the early Simple Minds who started pushing their music into the world at the tail end of the 1970s. This current listening obsession is down to my having recently read Graeme Thompson's excellent biography of Simple Minds, Themes for Great Cities, which so eloquently covers the band's early years. He made me want to listen to these songs again, and now I want you to do the same.

"You know that band everybody's been waiting for?" asked journalist Ian Cranna in the NME in 1978, "Well here they are." Born from the ashes of short-lived Glasgow punk act Johnny and the Self Abusers, Simple Minds emerged onto the post-punk scene seemingly fully formed, with songs, art-school aesthetic and enviable stage presence already firmly in place. "There was always an art thing in us," frontman and principle spokesman Jim Kerr would muse later, acknowledging the intertwined influences of David Bowie, Roxy Music, Kraftwerk, Donna Summer and more, "We wanted to get a band along those lines of darkness, and a sort of awareness, and put it over in an attractive type of art package."

Simple Minds released their debut single, 'Life In A Day', in March 1979, and it's the first of the two singles I want to write about today. It's an oddity in that, unlike the majority of the songs that would make it onto the band's debut album, it was a brand new track, written during the pre-production sessions for that album while underlining Simple Minds' interest in the possibilities of synthesisers courtesy of Mick MacNeil's prominent keyboard riffs.

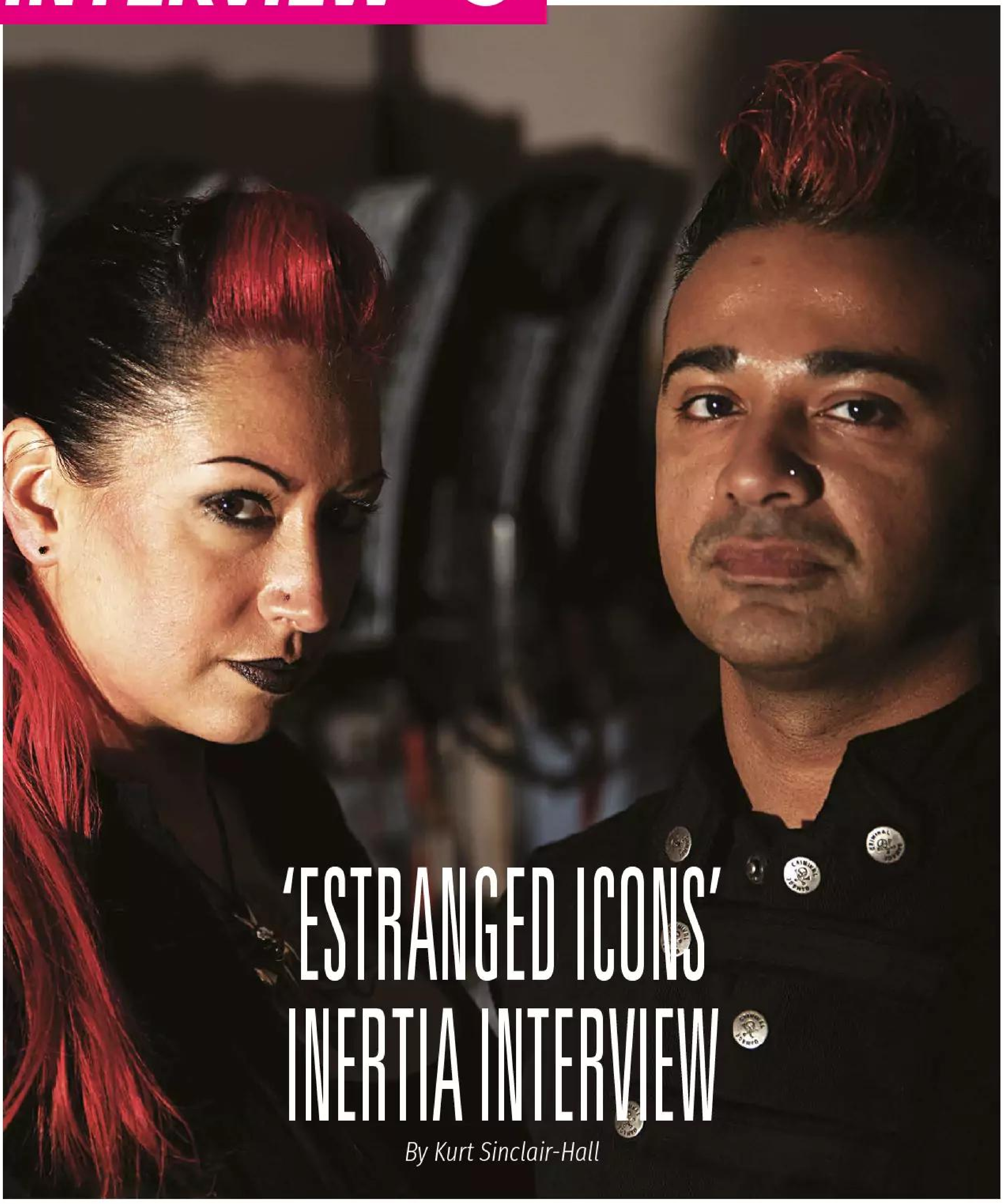
The title track from the first of the two albums Simple Minds would release in 1979, 'Life In A Day' was a minor hit for the band when it peaked at number 62 in the UK Singles Chart in May. Interest in the band was high and they were given the opportunity to perform 'Life In A Day' on The Old Grey Whistle Test, and as part of a session for BBC Radio 1. The single also attracted some encouraging support from the music press, including one from the NME's Julie Burchill which she filed under the provocative headline 'Young Literate Punky Late-Comers To Bring Down The Government'.

It would be another two years and further four singles before Simple Minds would bother the UK charts again, but importantly 'Life In A Day' caught the ear of the Blitz Club's Rusty Egan, who started playing it as part of his influential playlist, which in turn exposed Simple Minds to a new audience at the exact same time that what the band was trying to do was becoming fashionable. Another single, 'Chelsea Girl', followed in June and was also adopted by Egan, but it wasn't a hit and the band were already keen to distance themselves from their debut. "Two months after Life In A Day came out, we were really embarrassed by it." Jim Kerr confessed later, "It was very, very poppy, and we realised we were drowned in influence. We had to try to get our own sound."

Simple Minds' second album, Real To Real Cacophony, was released in November 1979 to another flurry of media support, which included a return to The Old Grey Whistle Test and a radio session for John Peel, and was greeted with enthusiasm by the music press. In Record Mirror, Ronnie Gurr declared "This is a mighty progression ... Real To Real Cacophony lays waste to Life In A Day which was itself a promising little slice of occasional magic." Despite such positive attention the album, and 'Changeling', the sole single to be taken from it, failed to chart.

And it's the jagged, metallic groove of 'Changeling' which I want to celebrate as my second Blitz track here. Slipping out immediately after Christmas 1979 it attracted some justifiably positive attention from the music press. "Best track from 'Real To Real Cacophony'," proclaimed Record Mirror, who also correctly identified the single as a contender for the first Blitz playlists of the new decade. Graeme Thompson describes 'Changeling' as 'post-punk psychedelia you could dance to', and he's right you know. It's a perfect Blitz club track. You don't have to dance, but you'll want to. ●

SIMPLE MINDS
Changeling



Lexy and Reza

'ESTRANGED ICONS' INERTIA INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall

When Gary Numan suggests that Inertia are "the best and most aggressive band in London", you should maybe pay attention. With 2024 providing the release of the band's fourteenth studio album Estranged Icon, it was fairly certain that a UK tour would follow. And lo, it came to be...Having already spent the majority of last year touring with Depeche Mode tribute act The Devout, enigmatic frontman Reza Udhin took time out with his band colleague Alexys B to chat with Blitzed about the new lineup, the album and the forthcoming tour.

> **" I was in Killing Joke for nearly two decades "**

Reza, you are kept incredibly busy touring with the UK's biggest Depeche Mode tribute act, The Devout. How do you find time and head space to create your own music?

Reza: "Yes, for the past seven years or so... It took a good while to get into the routine I had before The Devout, a lot to do with Covid, which changed things up a bit. I had already written some music before Covid, which ended up being the more soft, musically orchestrated-driven songs like 'New Format.' During Covid, I ended up going back to my roots and writing more aggressive EBM songs, it felt right at the time. The Devout has grown to a level we did not anticipate, it has been absolutely magical. We are big DM fans, so it's amazing for us to perform our favourite songs to an audience who also love those songs. However, it is important for me to keep to what I feel I do best, which is writing songs and production, so I find the time.. as taxing as that is!"

You clearly enjoy being on stage in front of an audience, performing with The Devout and also Inertia. But what do you get back emotionally from wearing each hat, on the one hand performing world-famous covers and also presenting your own songs?

Reza: "I really love performing, I have done it for the past 35 years or so. I've toured constantly with Inertia since 1992, we have toured several times in the UK and Europe but mostly in the USA. Close to 4000 shows with Inertia since that time. I also was in the band Killing Joke for nearly two decades and that was fun too playing to thousands of people worldwide, and on top of that I spent about 5 years doing musical theatre in London, which taught me so much, particularly how to use my voice. But for me personally, nothing comes close to performing my own songs to an audience who appreciate it. Hearing from our followers with Inertia after each show, whether it is in London, Sheffield, New York or Los Angeles.. hearing what my songs mean to people around the globe is the best feeling ever and I am ever so grateful I get to be in that position."

Is it hard to switch mentally between the two bands?

Reza: "Not for me. Inertia is what I have done for several decades, that never leaves me. The Devout is just almost like a theatre show, where we get to perform the best music that we never wrote, to people who appreciate it. I can do 8 months of The Devout non-stop and then step straight back to Inertia a week later, like I did in 2024 for our Inertia UK Tour and US festival appearances.. I love it all!"

The new Inertia album, Estranged Icon, features the return of former Inertia member and Cryonica Music co-founder Alexys B (aka Lady Luck Lexy) providing vocals on 'Scowl'. After a ten-year break, is Alexys a permanent addition to the band line-up?

“Covid brought back some of the anger”

credit Cybermind Photography

Reza: “Yes, we were super happy to welcome Alexys back into the band... she had time out to concentrate on her rockabilly band (Lady Luck Lexy), which she needed at the time. When she returned last year for our 2024 UK tour, it felt just right. She will be more involved in the next albums and tours too. It feels like we came full circle at a great time in Inertia history.”

Alexys: “I was shocked to be invited back to be honest! But I never left the music industry, just the genre. You mentioned switching mentally between The Devout and Inertia...I can say the same for myself with my rockabilly band/DJ/Presenter and going back to industrial. Our passion for music comes from deep within and it all flows no matter which hat we're wearing that day. A little like how an actor can be versatile with the roles that they perform.”

Inertia, since 1992, is essentially yourself and a collective of very eclectically experienced musicians. Some of the band members have been with you for quite some time. Tell us about the current Inertia lineup and their talents.

Reza: “The longest standing member is Alexys B, who joined in 1997 and stayed until 2014, then rejoined in 2024! Alexys plays drums with us and also sings solo songs, plus co-wrote with us for years. She was and still is the co-owner of our label, Cryonica Music.”

Alexys: “Last year, my partner, Nick Bayford, joined on guitar for the tour and will be returning again this year. He also contributed on the song ‘Scowl’.”

Reza: “Andrew Lowlife has been with us for over 15 years, our ever-loyal keyboard player. Andrew had big success with his band previous to Inertia (Swarf), which was also released on Cryonica Music. Plus he runs great dark alternative nights in Brighton. Ollie Cater has been with Inertia for over 15 years too, touring the world with us and playing guitars on all the albums since he joined, and he is an integral part of our sound. Tim Stephens played a tour with us in 2014 and has contributed to every album since then. Tim used to be in the UK band EMF. Blue Jigsaw played drums with us after Alexys left, until recently when she returned. Blue is an amazing alternative circus performer! There have been so many great musicians who have come and gone and also passed away. I really have been blessed with great band members over the years.”

How does it feel on stage to be part of this incredibly talented group?

Reza: “There is nothing better than doing this. I love it and it is my life.”

Having just released your fourteenth studio album in three decades, Estranged Icon, how does this sit amongst your previous releases? And how much do you feel your songwriting has developed through your whole journey from those early EBM days?

Reza: “It is my best release hands down. I feel the combination of the synthpop, EBM, industrial and soundtrack material has worked perfectly on this album. For each Inertia album over the past fifteen years or so, I would write between 20-40 songs and choose the best ten songs for the album. With Estranged Icon, after it being so long, I had over seventy songs to go through. I feel I chose the best ten songs for this release. I am immensely proud of this album. Plus, the album will be released on blue coloured vinyl in June 2025. It is our very first vinyl release in thirty-three years!”

One of the outstanding features of your new album, apart from the sparkly clean production, is the overall quality of songwriting. Have you been influenced by anyone in particular through your career?

Reza: “Thank you! I just love great songwriting and production, it is my biggest passion. I love listening to albums which are produced beautifully. Writing wise, I try to learn from the greats. Of course, I love Depeche Mode and Martin Gore's songwriting in their first twenty years. But I also absolutely adore The Beatles, The Bee Gees, Abba, Simon and Garfunkel. There is nothing better than a good, well written, thought-out song in my world. I live for moments like that.”

Alexys: “I won't forget the first time that Reza sent me the idea for ‘Scowl’, I told him straight away THIS is how I always envisioned Inertia sounding. I anticipate the song writing being stronger in the oncoming releases and hope that all of the influences of what we all do in our separate projects can contribute to that.”

So this is your first body of work since 2017. How much effect did the Covid period have on your motivation for songwriting?

Reza: “Covid brought back some of the

anger I had in the early Inertia material, hence some of the more aggressive EBM songs on this album. It was an essential time of reflection. I actually used a couple of songs from the very first Inertia demo tape in 1992 on this album, songs that had never been released, 'Conflict' and 'No Reserve'. The lyrics that we wrote in those years are even more relevant in 2025. It felt right to finally release those songs."

You have a really punishing tour schedule throughout the year with your bands. How do you prepare yourself physically and mentally for this?

Reza: "This is what I have done for most of my adult life, so it's all quite normal to me. If I don't have a show on a weekend, it feels strange!" (laughs)

This is your first release with Jim Semonik's Distortion Productions label. How did you know Jim, and what made you sign after being with Metropolis for so long?

Reza: "I've known Jim for decades, he has put on several Inertia shows in Pittsburgh over that time. He is a very good, cherished friend. We loved being part of the Metropolis Records family for years, really enjoyed our time with them. They are great people who absolutely love what they do. The late Dave Heckman who was the creator of Metropolis was such a good man. I am ever so grateful for him taking a chance with us and having faith with us for several releases. I only took the decision to part ways with Metropolis, purely as I felt we were getting lost in the other great bands and releases they had. I was looking at starting to release Inertia material on Cryonica again, until our US manager (Athan Maroulis of Spahn Ranch and Noir) mentioned I should chat to Jim. In the first interaction I had with Jim about the possibility of taking Inertia on, I knew he was the one for us. Jim has been absolutely amazing, he is so dedicated to his bands. Jim is a godsend, a great label and a beautiful person!"

How excited are you to take the album on the road and play these new songs?

Reza: "Very excited! We did a UK tour in Summer 2024 for the album with our friends AYRIA from Canada. Our 2025 UK Tour is a headline tour with very special guests from each city we hit along the way, including great bands like Black Light Ascension, Goteki, Agency V, Das Fluff and more. We can't wait!"

Alexys: "I'm really looking forward to being back on the road again with Inertia. It's refreshing to step out of my usual routine in rockabilly and do something entirely different. I've had a few LLL fans come along to the last tour and despite being out of THEIR comfort zones, they really loved it. I also loved reconnecting with the fans who had supported Inertia over the decades and still come out to the gigs!"

What are you most looking forward to in 2025?

Reza: "Our UK Tour in September and our mini US East Coast Halloween Tour!" ●

For more information: www.inertia.rocks and facebook.com/inertiaband

credit Chris Ruiz

'A STAR IN ORBIT STILL'

ALEX FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES - INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall

The Northern Territories is an electronic music project from Sweden, formed in Uppsala in 1992 by yourself; John Alexander Ericson, aka Alex (vocals, instruments and electronics) and Stefan Sääf (vocals and electronics). Can you tell us how you got together? Were you already friends?

"We met through a mutual friend in high school. Stefan and this guy had a band, and they had heard I owned a synth (Roland Juno 106) at home, and they wanted me to join their band. They were probably more interested in the synth than me! There were not many gig opportunities there…so we actually only started playing live after we got signed. The first gig was at a festival in Germany. We were absolutely terrified as I'm sure you can imagine."

Who were your influences musically speaking that got you interested in making your own music?

"Probably the usual 80's stuff when we first met, like Depeche Mode,, Propaganda, A-ha, all those bands. Then when we started The Northern Territories in the early 90's, grunge and the alternative music scene was exploding, so we were very influenced by that, making our own records... Portishead, Tricky, Massive Attack, and REM's Automatic for the People... all that stuff we kind of mixed with our electronic sound."

Can you tell us about the keyboards and equipment you used to make your music, and where you used to rehearse together?

"In Sweden in the 90s we had our own little studio, it was all hardware synths. The first albums were made with E-mu Emulator III, PPG Wave 2.3, Prophet VS and an Oberheim Xpander, running an Atari with Cubase. Those synths would cost a fortune today, but nobody wanted them back then. We also had an old E-mu Emax that came in quite late in the production."

Your first album Midnight Ambulance was released in 1994 on the German label Maschinery Records. Can you tell us a little about how the album came together, and who did what to make the record?

"We had all the songs and arrangements and sent a demo to Maschinery. They responded within a few weeks and wanted to record an album. They sent us recording equipment and we recorded it in Sweden and then went to Berlin to mix it in the Maschinery Studio. I found the demo the other week actually. The songs sound exactly like the versions on the album, so we basically just recorded the demo versions again. The Maschinery boss Jor Mulder, helped us mix and co-produce the album. We had never been in a studio before, at least not to record an album. We were only 20-21 years old."

Your second album Orange Moon followed three years later. History tells us the second album can be notoriously difficult to produce, did you find that?

"No, we were on fire! I think when Midnight Ambulance came out after the summer of 94, we had already demoed the second album and were ready to record it . So Orange Moon was basically ready to be recorded when Midnight Ambulance

"we didn't have anything left to say"

came out. That's when we learned that the music business doesn't really work like that. At least not back then, so it was a waiting game. We added a lot of acoustic guitar on the second album, probably because the songs demanded it, and there was a lot of indie music around at the time so it was hard not to be influenced. Dog Man Star by Suede was a big record for us at the time, I remember."

While the first two releases were generally classified as synth pop, for the third album, Satellite People, you embraced more guitars into your sound. Why did you change direction?

"It felt natural to pick up the electric guitar for that one. I remember our manager telling the studio engineer, "don't let them go too rock!!" But we did of course. Again it was probably influenced by a lot of the music that was around at that time. PJ Harvey's To Bring You My Love was one of them. I mean even Depeche Mode went harder on Songs of Faith and Devotion and Radiohead's Ok Computer."

Following the release of the third album in 1999, The Northern Territories disbanded, much to the distress of your fans and followers, leaving a void in the Swedish electronic scene. What happened?

"I think it was a combination of being bored of the whole thing, that the music industry was so much slower than we were. Again, our third album was finished when our second album came out...and I think we also felt we didn't have anything left to say at that point. So it kind of just fizzled out. When Satellite People came out we had already stopped making music."

You both pursued solo careers in music, with Stefan focusing on sound engineering in his own studio, and you with a solo career, relocating to Berlin. How long was it until you both started missing the friendship and unity of the band?

"As you say, after we stopped, Stefan got more into sound engineering so it didn't take that many years until we started working together again, now more in the sense that Stefan would mix a lot of my various projects in his Studio. He also mixed the new TNT album, apart from singing, obviously. So we kept in touch over the years, even though we didn't live in the same country, but I would send him files and sessions to mix. By coincidence or not we ended up both living in Berlin. So about two years ago we started playing with the idea of recording some TNT stuff again. No pressure, just try a few songs and see how it feels. 'Is This How Mercy Feels?' and 'Love Doesn't Live Here Anymore' were the first two songs we recorded. I think we both felt that we were on to something, so we just carried on without thinking about a release or an album."

Twenty five years later, in 2025, you got back together and created a new album, A Star in Orbit Still, released on Dependent Records. (Blitzed reviewed it in our May issue and we loved it, calling it "breathtaking"). How has the album been received elsewhere by the media and Northern Territories fans in particular? What was the catalyst for you both to decide to get back together now?

"We always had a very dedicated fanbase back in the day, but it was quite surprising to see that they were all still there after all these years. It makes us happy that those early records must have meant something to people. There seems to be a lot of love out there for the new songs. In many ways it felt like we picked up where we left off. We didn't really think that much about musical direction when we started recording for A Star in Orbit Still. People still say the new stuff sounds very much like The Northern Territories, so I guess it's in our DNA somewhere."

Did you mainly use software synths, traditional keyboards, or a mixture?

"I still prefer hardware because it's more creative and more fun. On this latest album is a mix of hardware and softsynths. I use the Native Maschine quite a lot, and we're quite fond of the Hydra Synth. Then there's a PPG, an Emax, ms20, sh101, and a bunch of software, so it's a mix really. Whatever does the job."

What is the plan for you both in 2025 and beyond?

"We want to get out there and play the songs to people, so that's the main priority. We're in a quite creative process still, we have loads of songs that we didn't have time to finish for this album, probably around ten or so, so we'll get back in the studio and try to finish those off. Maybe that will be something for the next album or upcoming EPs. Time will tell. We're both quite eager to record more stuff though. ●

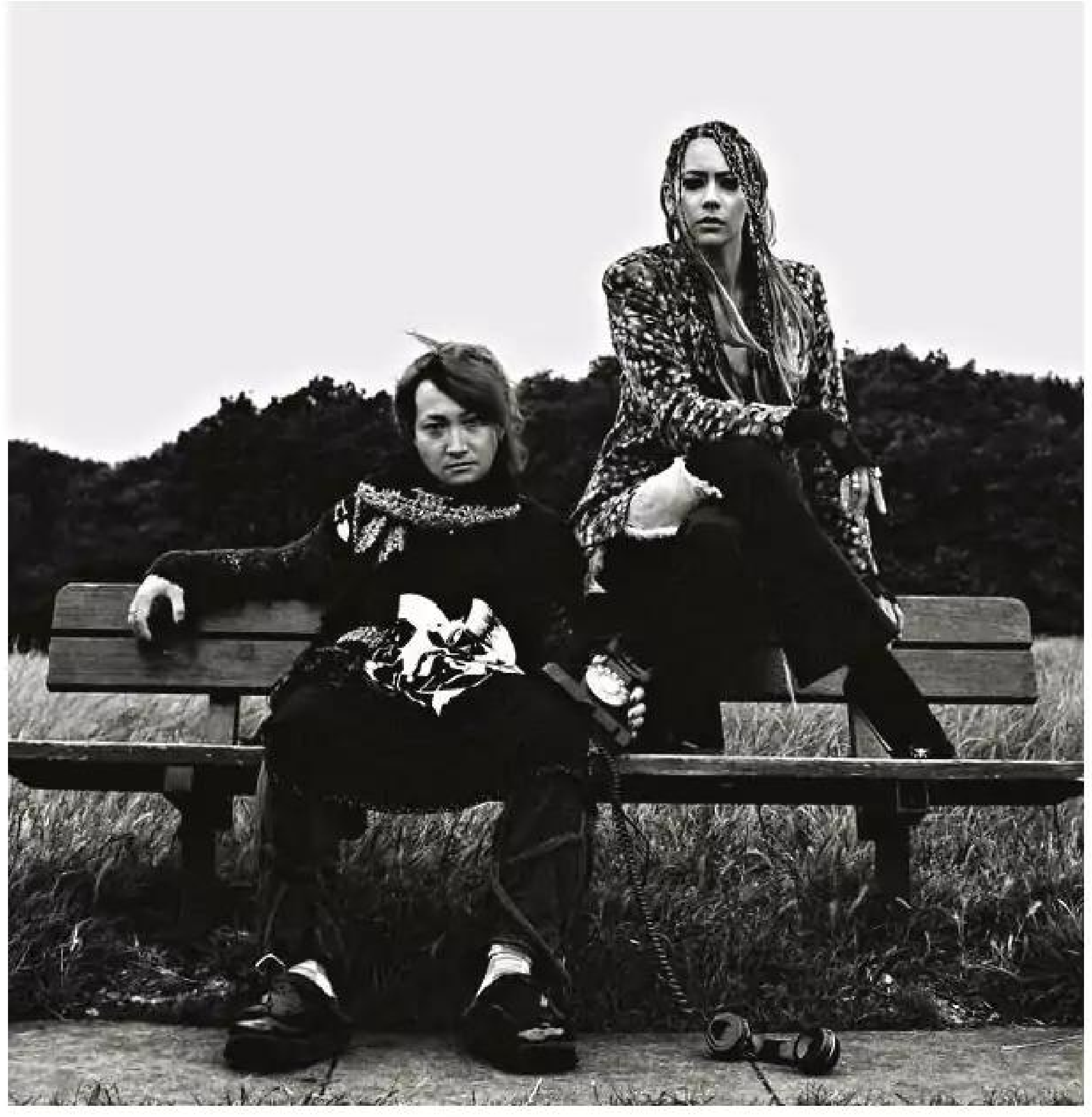
https://en.dependent.de/en/Artists/The-Northern-Territories

credit Chris Ruiz

Mik Scarlet Reviews

After a few issues where I veered off from the raison d'être of my reviews page, highlighting new (to me) acts I've found on social media, I have returned after a flood of fantastic acts popped up in my feed. By now Instagram's algorithm knows me well enough to feed me wonderful morsels of musical yumminess, so without further waffle, I give you the first part of my trawl, but rather than review a specific track I'm going to review the act and their sound, so you can do your own discovering. Yes, dear reader, Mik Scarlet's Review page is going interactive… well as much as you can in print.

LILYGUN

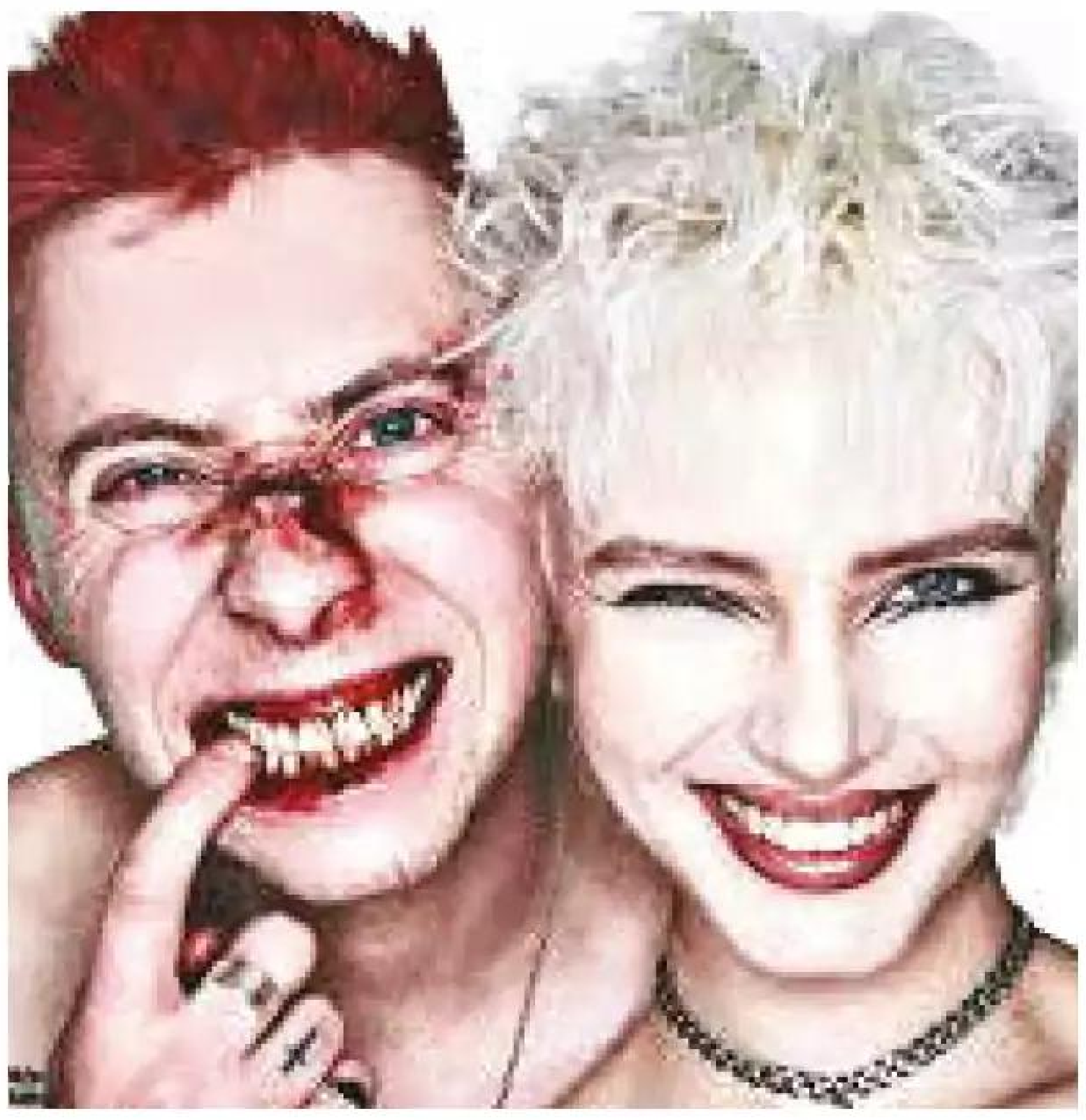


A total change of mood, Lilygun creates a gothic soft rock that appeals to this old gother. It's as if my guilty pleasure, Suzanne Vega, had been raised on a musical diet of The Sisters and The Mission, with a nice slice of classic rock while living in the deconscribed church. The driving force behind Lilygun, Anna-Christina, has a voice of crystal and they sound so spooky you might need to hold a cross before you dive into the world of Lilygun. It's well worth it and you don't really need the crucifix. You just need good taste and a dark soul.
www.lilygun.com

WREX

If any of you remember Age Of Chance from the 80s, Wrex are what would have happened if AOC had worked with Sneaker Pimps, creating full power arse-kicking power pop with a message perfect for the modern world. They are a package that seems to be fully formed ready for world domination, and I think the world is going to love them. Proper NuMetal. I can't find much about them as they are another band that goes for the less is more approach to the online world, other than they hail from Brighton, UK. Not too far to travel to catch them on home turf.
www.instagram.com/wearewrex

WARGASM



Rock drum and bass EBM madness, Wargasm continue in this issue's theme of hard arse music. I must have been in a radical mood when I was researching my reviews this issue. Touches of Sheep On Drugs, Nine Inch Nails, Atari Teenage Riot, Wargasm sound great and look great too. I bet their gigs go off big time. A duo, Milky Way and Sam Matlock, Wargasm take you, shake you and leave you in a sweaty heap. A happy heap.
www.wargasm.online

SPAMMERHEADS

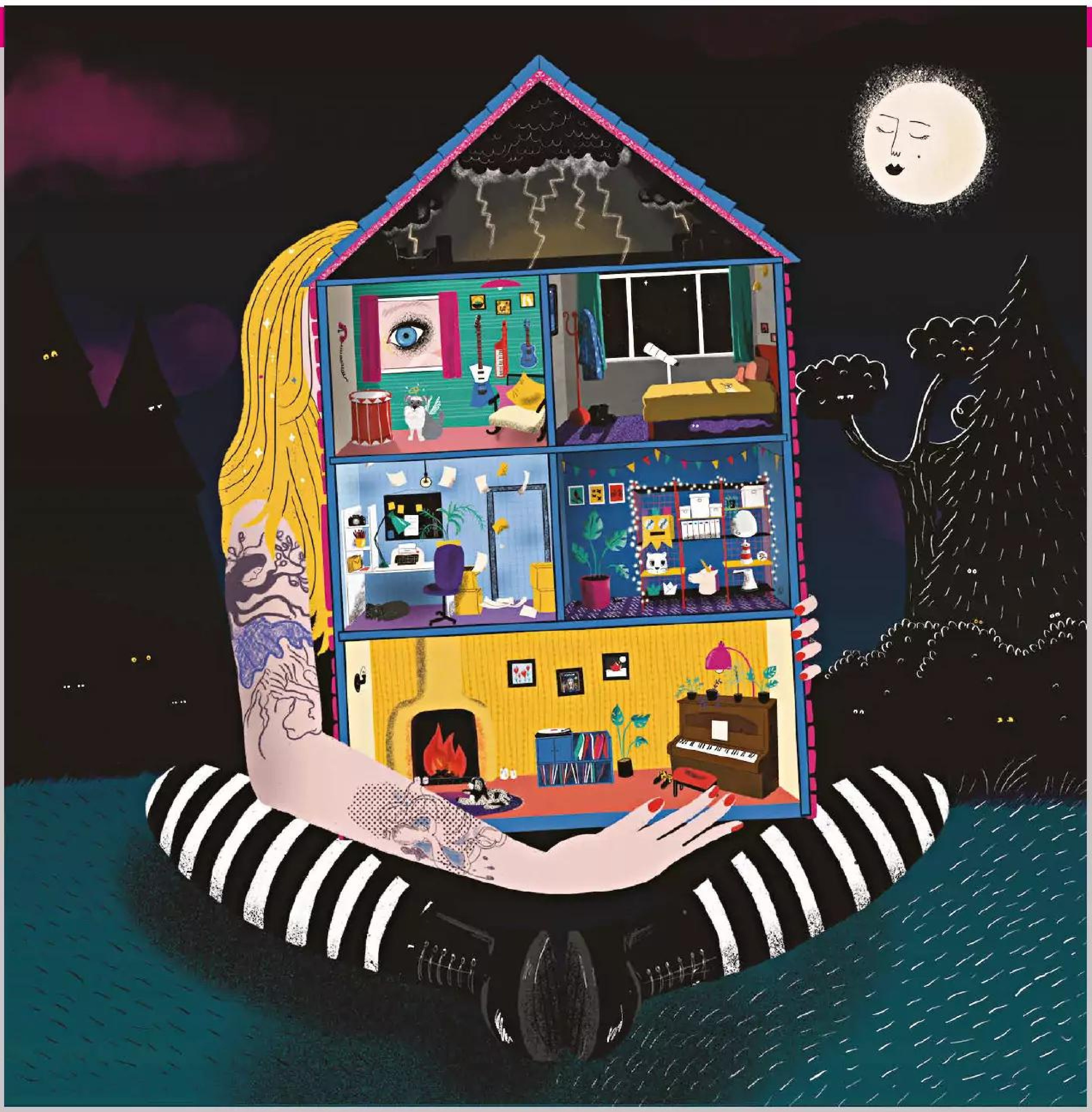
Claiming to be "working class electronic music", Spammerheads kick arse. Hailing from Valencia, Spain, Ana and David Spammer create industrial music with tunes and heart. The perfect combination of DAF, Nitzer Ebb and Front 242, with their own twist and some dance influences, Spammerheads would have been perfect in the Hard Club or Slimelight back in the day, and it's joyous to hear proper old school synth based EBM coming back. Their new album Disclaimer is out now on Bandcamp, on Soil Records, which is a fantastic slice of EBM, and their previous releases that allow you to follow the creative journey of Spammerheads. They can spam me any day.
www.spammerheads.bandcamp.com

INFEKTOMORPH

We end as we began, with a gorgeous slice of old school EBM, mixed with some Darkwave to create hard edged synth music that will infekt you for sure. The Infektomorph Instagram account is a must for any synthhead, packed with old school synths being pushed to their edge, but no pictures of the band. Mysterious. Hailing from California, whoever they are, they must have someone with a fantastic connection to buy some old Soviet synths. Synth envy big time. All I know is I want to know more, and so will you.
https://linktr.ee/infektomorph

That's it for now. I might need a lie down after such a hard-edged full on music roundup, or I might go and bring down the state.

PENFRIEND
HOUSE OF STORIES



I discovered Penfriend on Facebook doing my usual deep dive for my review page. Heard a track and purchased everything, which included a preorder for House Of Stories. Now of course, by the time you read this the album already charted in the indie LP charts at number 2, so you may already own it. If you don't, here's why you should.

House Of Stories opens with, yes you guessed it, 'House Of Stories'. A big synth, progish, soarscape with a big, big singalong chorus. An entire album self-penned, recorded and produced by Laura Kidd in her Launchpad studio, the production quality is worthy of a Sarm West or Air Studios. 'Emotional Tourist' gets its 90s indie baggies on, before veering off down a synth spoken word power cry. Honestly two tracks in and I'm hooked. Bravo Laura. She does a great chorus and 'Emotional Tourist' is the perfect break up, girls out on the town track. 'Space, Man' is clever and funny, jangly guitars and power chords, big vocals and another catchy track. It's not exactly 80s or 90s, it's that perfect mixture of influences for today. Each track has its own personality but with a single theme and feel. 'The Life Of The Party' is melancholy and sweet, sad with hope of a better tomorrow. Really captures the heartache of knowing it's over but not wanting it to be. Lighters up in the arena moment where the girls all hug and sing together.

That crashes into 'Hold Tight', that almost has a Depeche Mode feel. It might be the sample pluck. I'm excited to hear where this goes. Yes, very Black Celebration, a Martin track. I really love this. So empty but so full. Yummy. 'In The Light Sometimes' is another really catchy, sweet track. Her vocals are recorded so well, sung superbly and they are so well placed in the mix it feels like she is singing next to you. It really adds to the touching honesty of House Of Stories. You want to reach out and hug her, telling her it's going to be alright.

'Seasons' continues the soul searching, more 90s indie pop but with a mix of the feel of the end of summer, laying on the grass, sun burning through the trees, knowing tomorrow it's home back to work. 'Survival Information' falls onto Laura's wonderful warm vocals before kicking arse with a full on monster rock out. Nice. 'May We Be Loved' is just stunning. For a fan of Suzanne Vega and the like, this has me covered in goosebumps. Like being carried away on a warm breeze, surrounded by bird song. I absolutely LOVE this one. 'The Argonauts' carries on the dreamlike feel from 'May We Be Loved', and I am in heaven. I love the vocal panning and plate reverb. I am honestly cold with goosebumps. This album ends by taking you to a heavenly place. Laura closes with 'Disco Loadout', which feels like no loadout I've ever done. It's bliss. If I had to listen to the last three tracks forever I'd be happy.

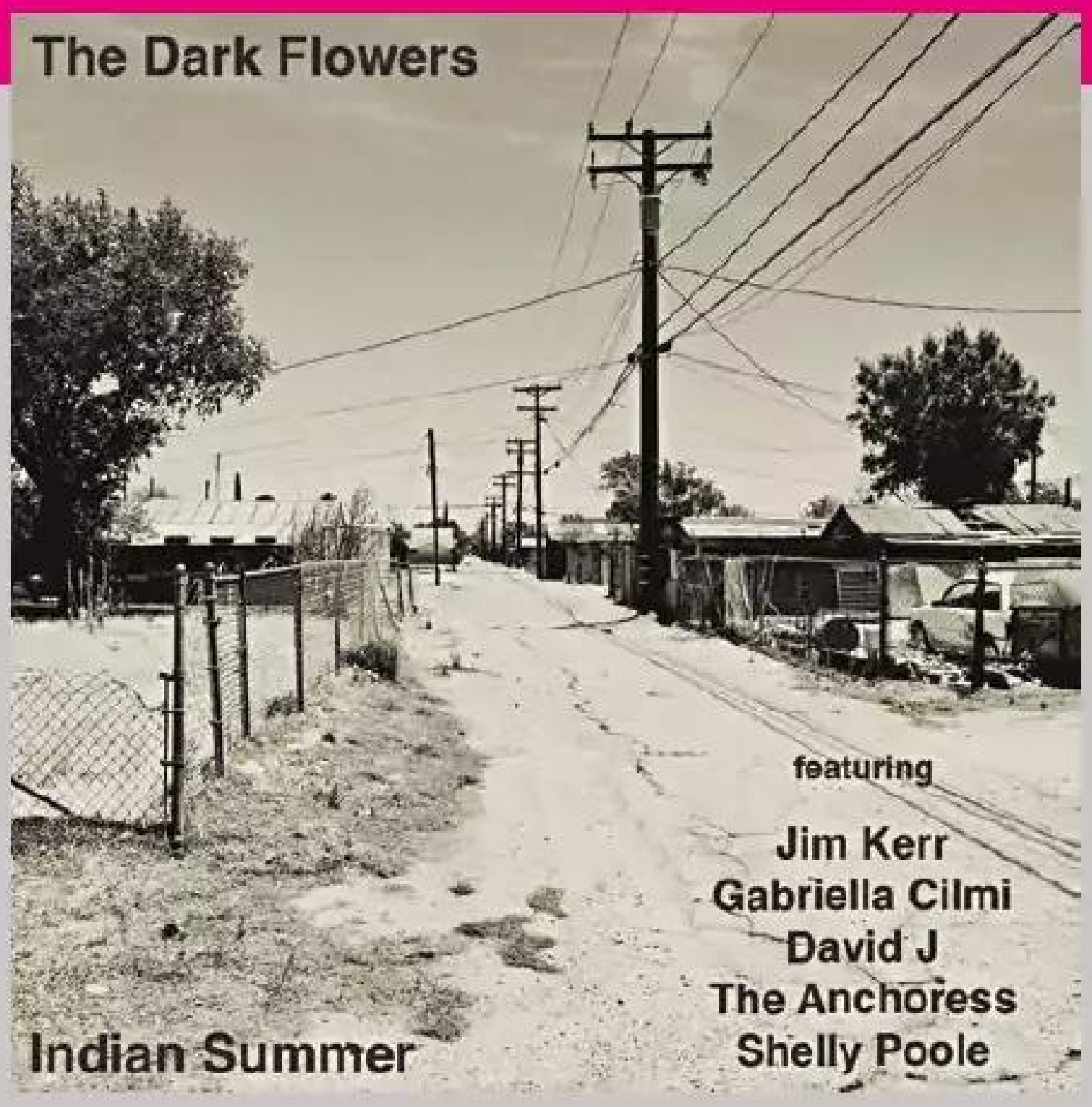
Honestly Laura Kidd should be monster huge. House Of Stories is a wonderful slice of honest, open, emotional wonder. I think you might hear this album in heaven and you'd know you were going to be OK for eternity.

Can you tell I like it? ●

Mik Scarlet

THE DARK FLOWERS
INDIAN SUMMER

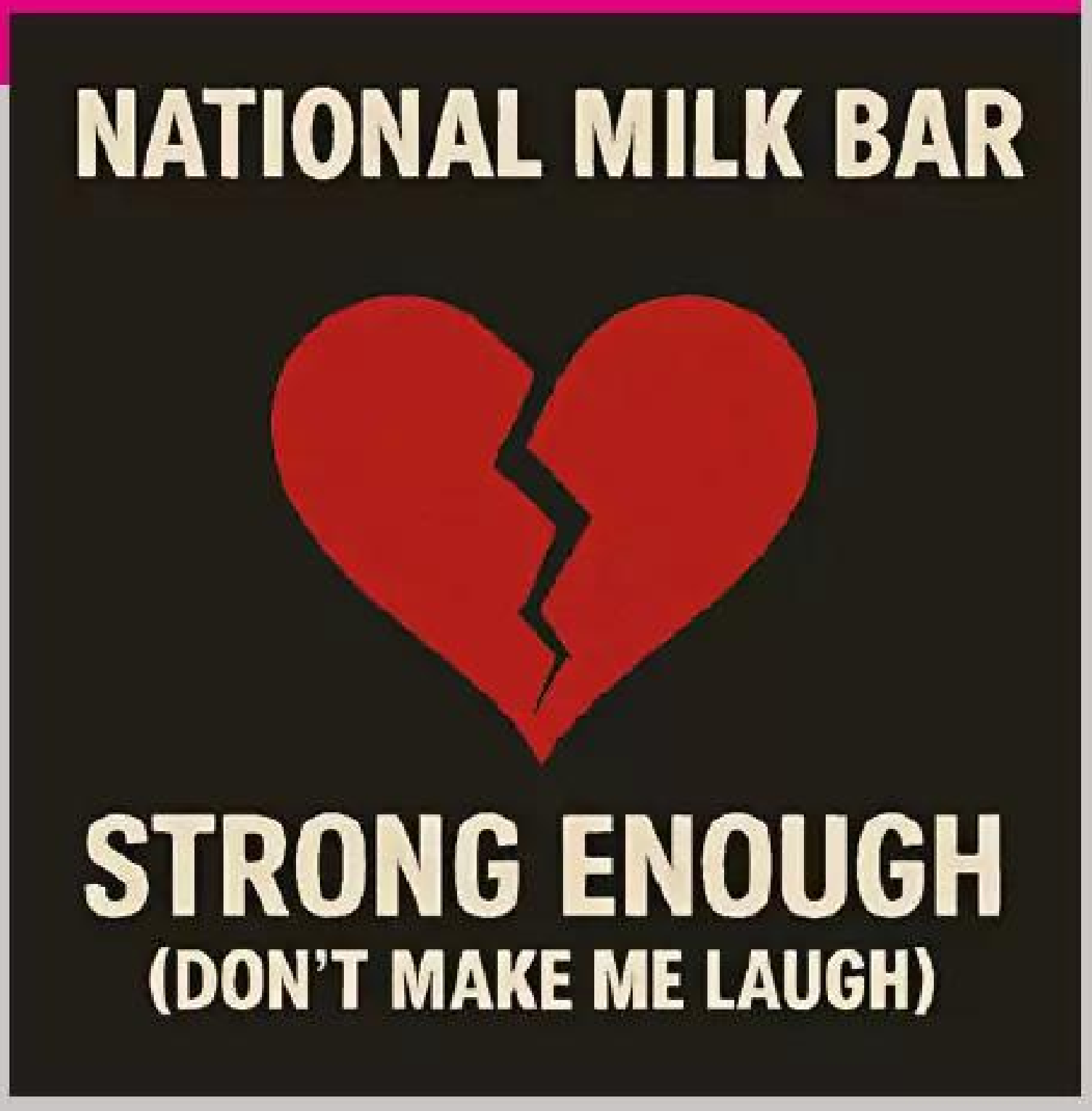
Loki Records via Cargo



The Dark Flowers is a project founded by Paul Statham - of new wave band B-Movie - which sees him adopting a Gorillaz-esque approach of collaborating on new tracks with a host of guest singers and musicians, including Jim Kerr, Dot Allison and David J. The band’s 2014 debut album Radioland was met with critical acclaim from the likes of MOJO and Rolling Stone, being described by the former as “a perfect album for a lonely winter night”. There is little doubt that this release - its highly accomplished, long awaited follow-up - will be met with similar acclaim, its dark and beguiling heart worn on its sleeve from the outset. Mid-album cut ‘The Lie That Tells the Truth’ is one highlight, with Jim Kerr channeling late-career David Bowie over gently undulating piano and electronics. ‘The Stars Stand In’ is another, pushing David J’s wistful, delicate vocals to the forefront of pretty acoustic guitars. Probably not one to play at parties, but a fantastic musical achievement all the same. ●

Imogen Bebb

NATIONAL MILK BAR
STRONG ENOUGH (DON’T MAKE ME LAUGH)

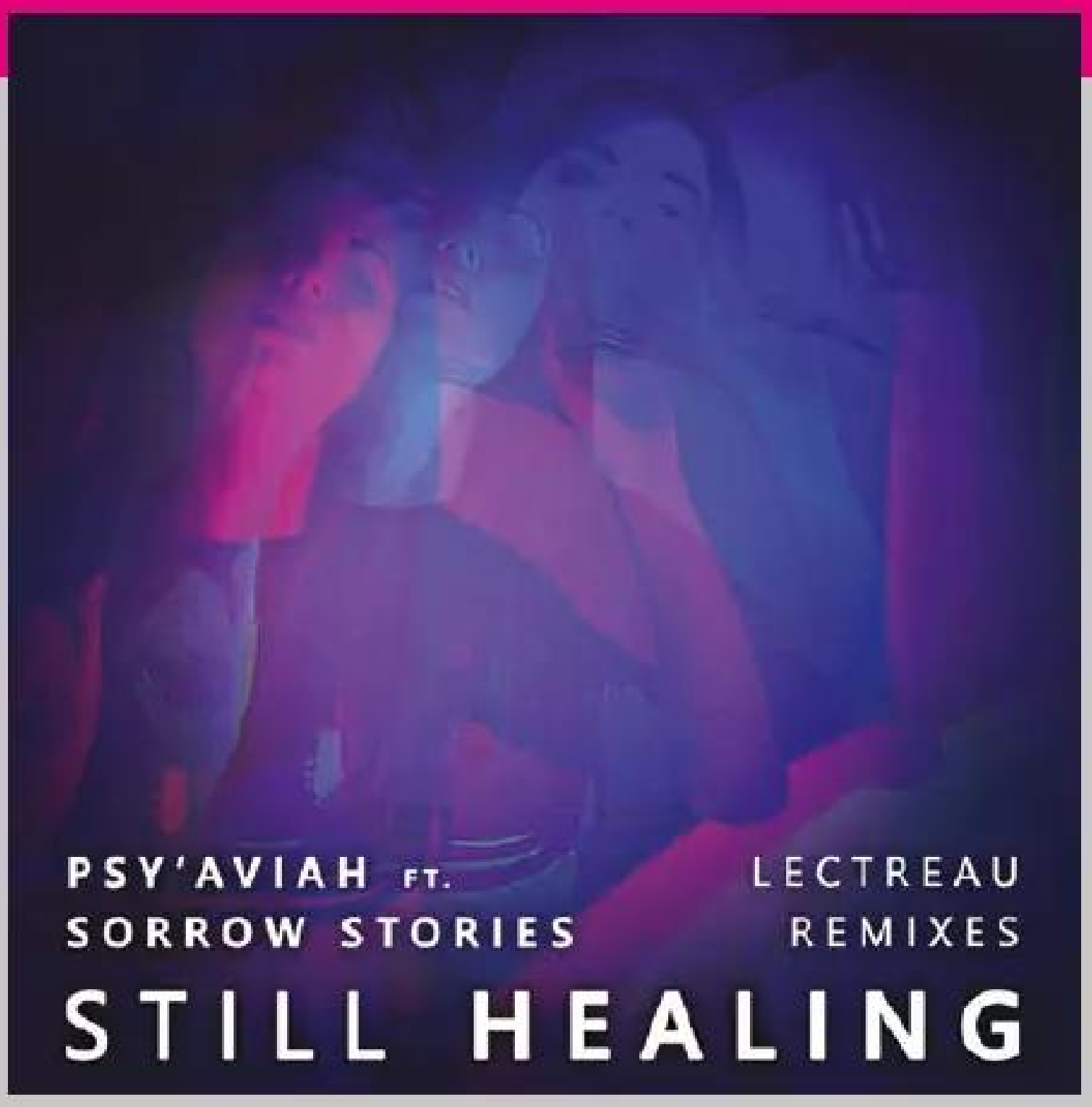


In 2022, National Milk Bar - aka Welsh duo Jason ‘Chuzz’ Childs and Sasha Jacobs - released ‘Don’t Make Me Laugh’, a brooding but energetic slab of electro-pop. As far as they were concerned, that was that - until they met The Art of Noise co-founder J.J. Jeczalik at a gig in London who made some suggestions as to how to give the song that little bit of extra punch. ‘Strong Enough’ is the new version of the track that National Milk Bar created having heeded these suggestions, moving some of the original sections around to emphasise the outro section of the original, whilst also adding in some more electronic elements to the backing. It is certainly an enjoyable listen; Jeczalik was right when he suggested that the original outro contained a serious hook, and as soon as you hear it as the chorus in this version it gets stuck in your head. Fans may mourn the loss of the colder, more stripped back sound of the original, but as an alternative version, ‘Strong Enough’ works extremely well. ●

Imogen Bebb

PSY’AVIAH FEAT. SORROW STORIES
STILL HEALING (LECTREAU REMIXES)

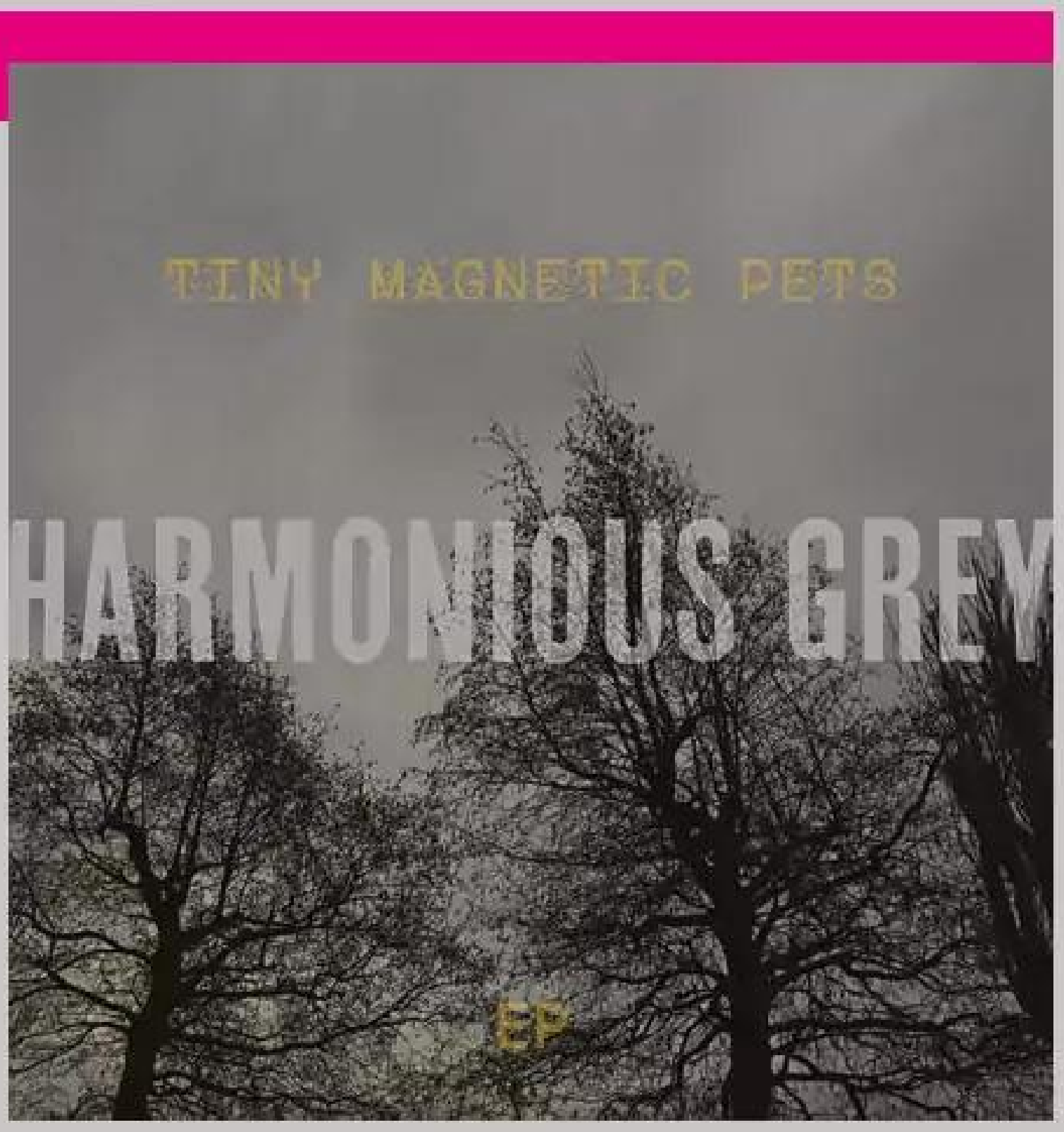
Alfa Matrix



This EP on Belgium-based label Alfa Matrix sees Lectreau (aka Passenger A from the band Metroland) presenting various remixes of two tracks released by Antwerp rock group Psy’Aviah and UK solo artist Sorrow Stories in 2023. The first of the two is ‘Healing’, a track that was originally “a laid-back melancholic dark pop song”, and which is remixed twice here. The most notable of these is probably the ‘Epic Process 12” mix’, which essentially pulls the track apart and puts it back together as though it was a cold, sinister, but more upbeat slab of electro. The second track, ‘Heaven Is Not Enough’, meanwhile, is subject to four very diverse remixes. The one with the most noticeable instant appeal is the ‘Greedy 7” mix’, which once again sees Lectreau picking up the pace of the original by adding strong synth pop rhythms and a catchy little riff. Its counterpart, however, the ‘Needy 7” mix’, is also well worth a listen, taking a more industrial turn and consequently emphasising the dark, potent power of the track’s original lyrics. ●

Imogen Bebb

TINY MAGNETIC PETS
HARMONIOUS GREY



Tiny Magnetic Pets return with a new EP, Harmonious Grey, which takes the trio into darker territory.

Leading the EP is ‘Low Places’ with muscular bass and a distorted lead vocal. Its direct approach musically and lyrically propels it from observations on a lack of integrity to confident, dance floor shout-along choruses.

The more sombre title track ‘Harmonious Grey’ follows up with a slower tempo and heavier vibe. Thick, harmonised voices to a backdrop of chiming guitar and percolating arpeggios lead to epic choruses underlined by rich pads and booming drums.

‘Autopilot’ cranks the tempo and energy back up. Urgent triplets are matched by a shuffling rhythm. Sassy vocals, synth stabs and addictive melodies combine for a feel like industrial glam rock.

Closing with the soothing ‘Magnets & Ghosts’. Resolving, reassuring, and warm, this track is candy for the ears and warm fuzzies for the heart.

I’m a fan of this new direction, and look forward to their forthcoming Gareth Jones produced album scheduled for release later this year.

https://tinymagneticpets.bandcamp.com/album/harmonious-grey-ep ●

Darren D.Danahy

AGENCY-V
NEVER MEANT TO BE

DISTORTION PRODUCTIONS

Formed in the 2020 lockdown, Agency-V know a thing or two about isolation. The trio of electronica-scene veterans comprises Marie Williamson (vocals), Lloyd Price (synths, programming), and Peter Steer (guitars). Never Meant To Be presents the band's story so far, compiling singles, EPs and remixes. The perfect place to start, in other words.

The title track sets out their sound manifesto with beguiling vocals, taut programming and a well-judged mesh of keys and guitars. 'Heart Of Stone' and 'Some Kind Of Game' are moody, surging slabs of melancholic precision that stay light on their feet, while 'Paranoid' and 'This Time' are bangers that demonstrate Agency-V have a damn fine way with well-constructed, driving hooks.

Recent single 'We Can Erase You' unsettles, with its focus on accountability and retribution in this febrile age of cancel-culture, fake news and online toxicity (sample lyric: 'And this illusion is the plausible lie / They will believe you if you look them in the eye'). 'Pray For The Sun' delivers haunting desolation that yearns for better times, while a propulsive take on Garbage's Stupid Girl does ample justice to the mighty original with a more hardcore electronic setting.

The clutch of remixes gathered here aren't just padding, either – they add extra shade and machine-tooled atmosphere to the collection. Numanoids will love the tense Grayedout Remix of 'Some Kind Of Game', and 'Freaking Out' is given added darkwave sheen by Paris Alexander and Eirene. In the hands of Psykelektric, 'We Can Erase You' becomes just that bit more menacing.

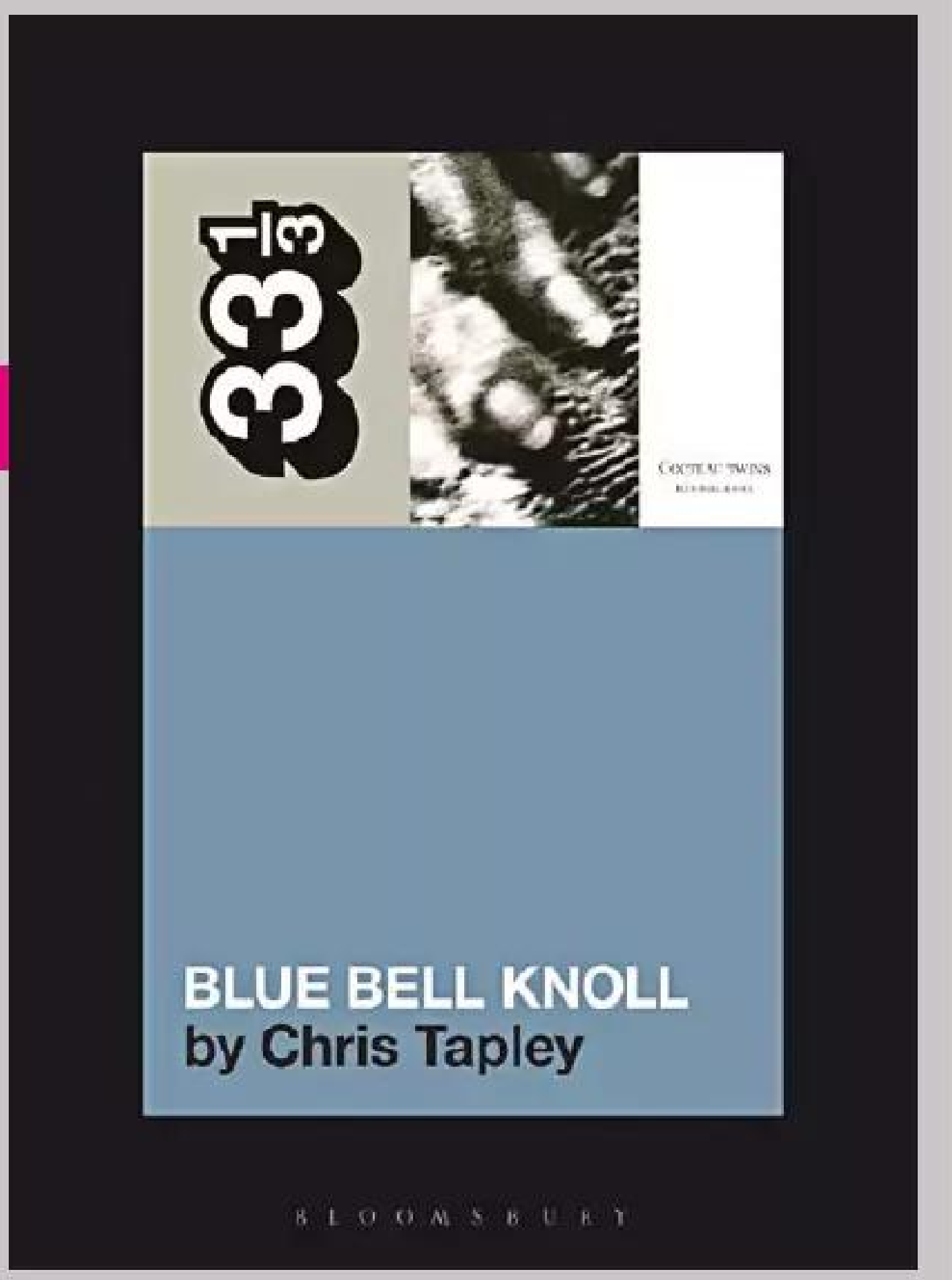
AGENCY
NEVER MEANT TO BE

Throughout, there's an underlying sense of enigma, unease and lengthening shadows; a spot-on soundtrack for our troubling times, basically. Fans of Client and Ladytron will find much to enjoy in this deft updating of vintage synthpop stylings, and on the promising evidence here, Agency-V's next move will be well worth following. ●

Steven Swaby

BLUE BELL KNOLL
CHRIS TAPLEY

33 1/3 Bloomsbury



Writing a book on the creation of Cocteau Twins' esoteric 1988 album Blue Bell Knoll is a venture not without its challenges. Essentially, it's the conundrum of writing a book on a unique record by an enigmatic music outfit (who also insist that they're not). On that basis, this book is less about the technical aspects of the album itself and more of an extended treatise on that elusive quality that made Cocteau Twins so special. Chris Tapley's fascinating exploration comes via the cultural lens of contemporary press coverage alongside some input from some of the band themselves. It's clear that some music reviewers were determined to unravel Liz Fraser's obscure lyrics - and in turn file and categorise the band in a neat box. "Explanation seems a reductive approach to the messy uncertainties of reality", suggests Tapley in response. What emerges in these pages is instead a celebration of creating music which is designed purely to be appreciated (and indeed interpreted) by listeners in their own individual way. ●

Paul Browne

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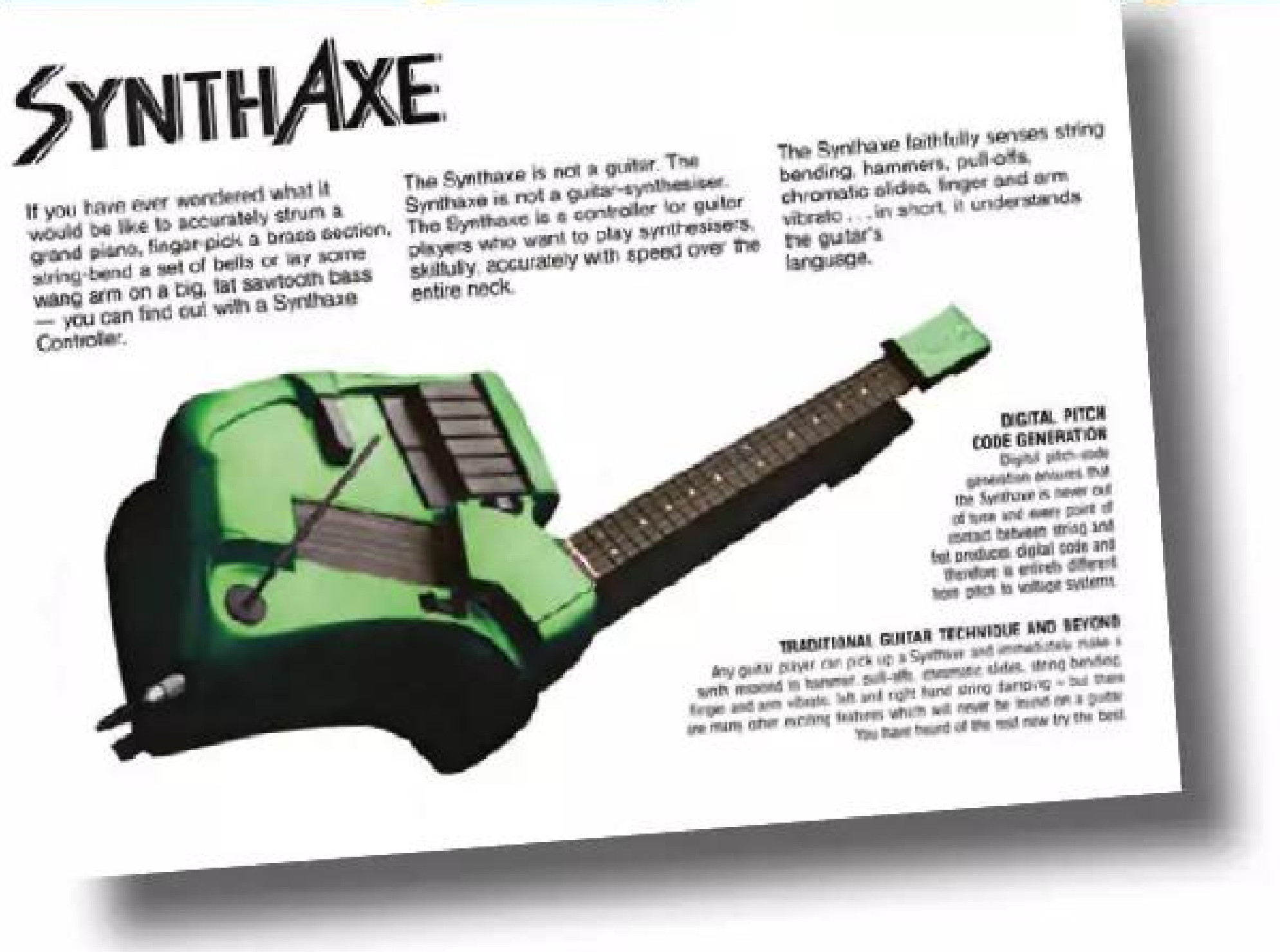
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SYNTH ENVY, THE GUITAR SYNTH

By Mik Scarlet

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As a keyboard player, a synthesist, I have continuously heard from guitarists "that's not a real instrument", "you just push buttons", "they all sound the same" and the biggest pile of doggie doo, "they do all the work for you". What's always annoyed me is that to my ears guitars all sound the same. "Oh, the tone of this one". Eh? To my ears, used to being able to make almost any sound I can dream of all on one instrument, guitars are... well guitars. Six strings and playing technique. Add effects, they do expand the possibilities, but even then they have a sound. It's what creates rock, or jazz or whatever genre of music you're playing. To me a synth can play anything, relying on the talent of the sound creator playing. OK, the guitarist/synthesist rivalry is as old as the hills, but I stand (or sit) by my feelings. I think that the proof of the jealousy from the total unbound creativity of the synth was proven a long time ago, when synths were still a newish creation. Because back then, even before MIDI, we saw the creation of the Guitar Synth. Now before any guitarists reading this blow a gasket, the old rivalry is pretty much over now, especially with musicians that love the genres that Blitzed covers, but back in the day it was almost war.

Early models were just glorified FX boxes, but there were gate/CV adaptations for guitars, allowing guitarists to play with the devil's instruments. ElectroHarmonix, who did a few small affordable synth type units back then, released the Condor GSM, building on their history of FX pedals, and even ARP created the Avatar, which was like playing a guitar through a synth so you could use the filters and the like. Nothing groundbreaking, but great tools for being creative using the strings.

With MIDI, suddenly the ability to put a synth in a box and play it from a guitar really had legs, and even to put a synth in a guitar body. Some looked amazing, others like a guitar that had been saved from an awful car crash, but whatever the image the guitar synth let guitarists have the freedom to play any sound, and to push their playing in all manner of new exciting directions. The SynthAxe was a guitar style MIDI controller, allowing guitarists to use their skills to play synths, but as it cost £10,000 and only 100 were made it wasn't the instrument to open up synthesis to guitarists. Yamaha had a go with the G10 and Roland released a series of combinations that were fairly popular. The GR300, the smaller version of the GR500 that used gate/CV, but again this was a pedal that could change the guitar sound with a very basic VCO/VCA added. The one that we all know from back then, made famous by Tony James from Sigue Sigue Sputnik, is the GR707. Played properly by Andy Summers of Police fame, James' GR707 became as associated with the Sputnik look as the high heels and fright wigs. In this example the GR707 was used more as a bass synth, but that is the joy of a synth, it can be a bass, a pad filler or a lead.

Coming more up to date, I was shocked to find out that the guitar shaped controller from Guitar Hero can also act as a MIDI Controller, although I would have thought it was more a trigger than an instrument. Combining the tonal and stylistic abilities of the guitar with the sound possibilities of the synth leads to a huge world of creativity. I must admit I tried to learn to play guitar a few years back, and got so far but found it frustrating. I have the fingers of a pianist and they're too flat and fat to be a guitarist. But then we all know that keyboard players dream of being drummers, bassists want to be lead guitarists and they in turn want to be the lead singer. The lead singer is so wrapped up in themselves they rarely notice the other members of the band (he says as an ex frontman).

There are modern versions of the guitar synth, from hardware to software, as well as emulators that recreate guitar sounds without playing a single string, but the golden era was back when Top of the Pops occasionally had those "what the hell is that?" moments, when the guitarist came to the front of the stage and played something that looked like it came out of Blade Runner or Star Wars.

Always fancied getting a GR707 but unless my fingers change as I hit 60 it would just be added to my collection of old gear that sits in a cupboard. So I'll fantasise about one and go back to my set up of proper synths, shaping any sound I can dream of.

Thus ends the bleating of the synthhead. ●

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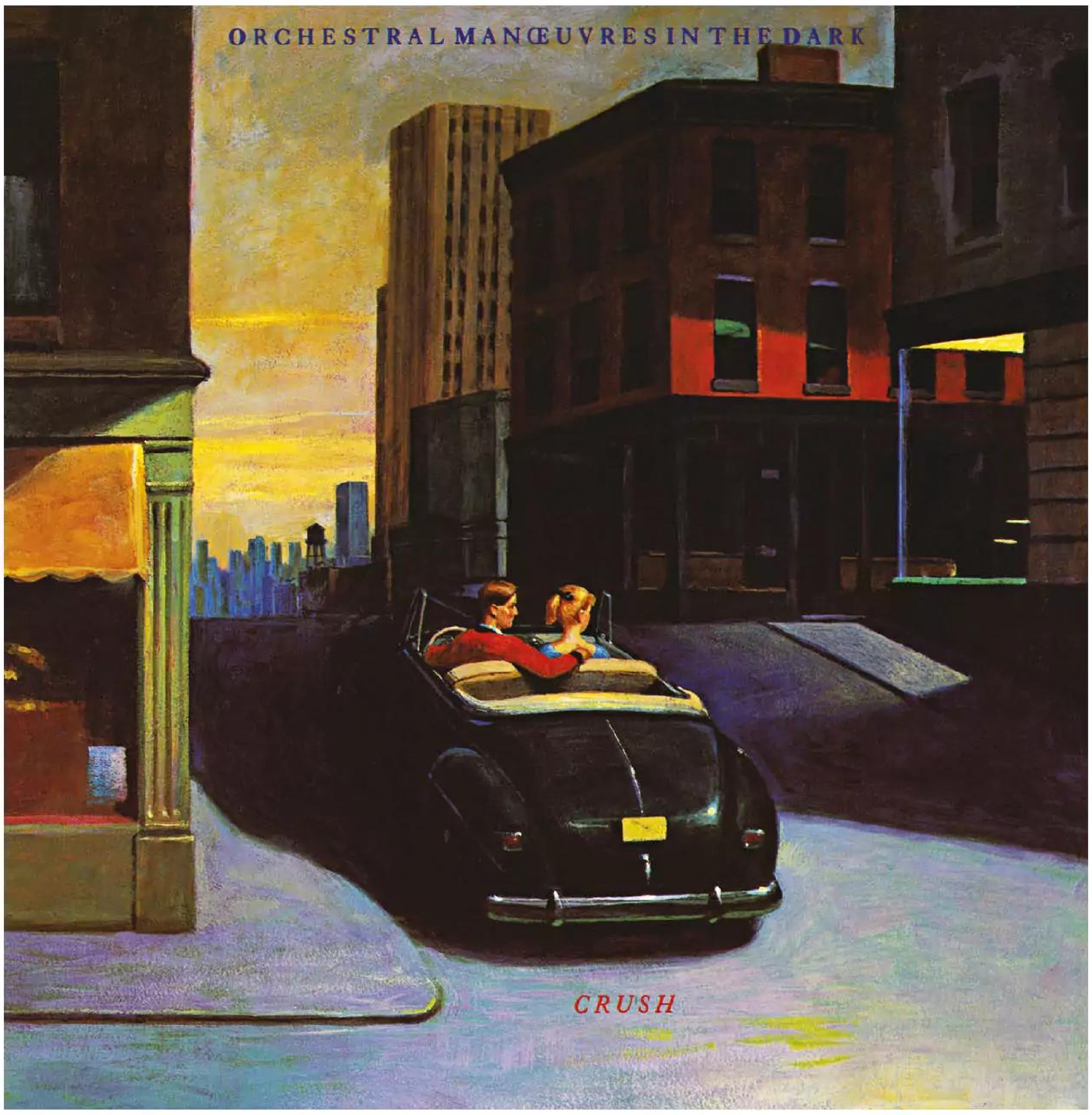
CRUSHED

40TH ANNIVERSARY – OMD CRUSH

By Paul Browne

Like many of their contemporaries, OMD's attempts to break America over the years had been a tough journey. Their early efforts were hindered by the fact that OMD's distinctive, idiosyncratic take on synth-pop didn't quite gel with American tastes. Yet as the band moved into the mid-80s, they found that even in their native UK they were facing challenges, the experimental approach on 1983 album Dazzle Ships having effectively curbed their forward momentum. Chastened, the band subsequently retooled their sound to the more colourful, funked-up vibe of 1984's Junk Culture, something which helped restore their fortunes - and seemed to resonate more with US audiences.

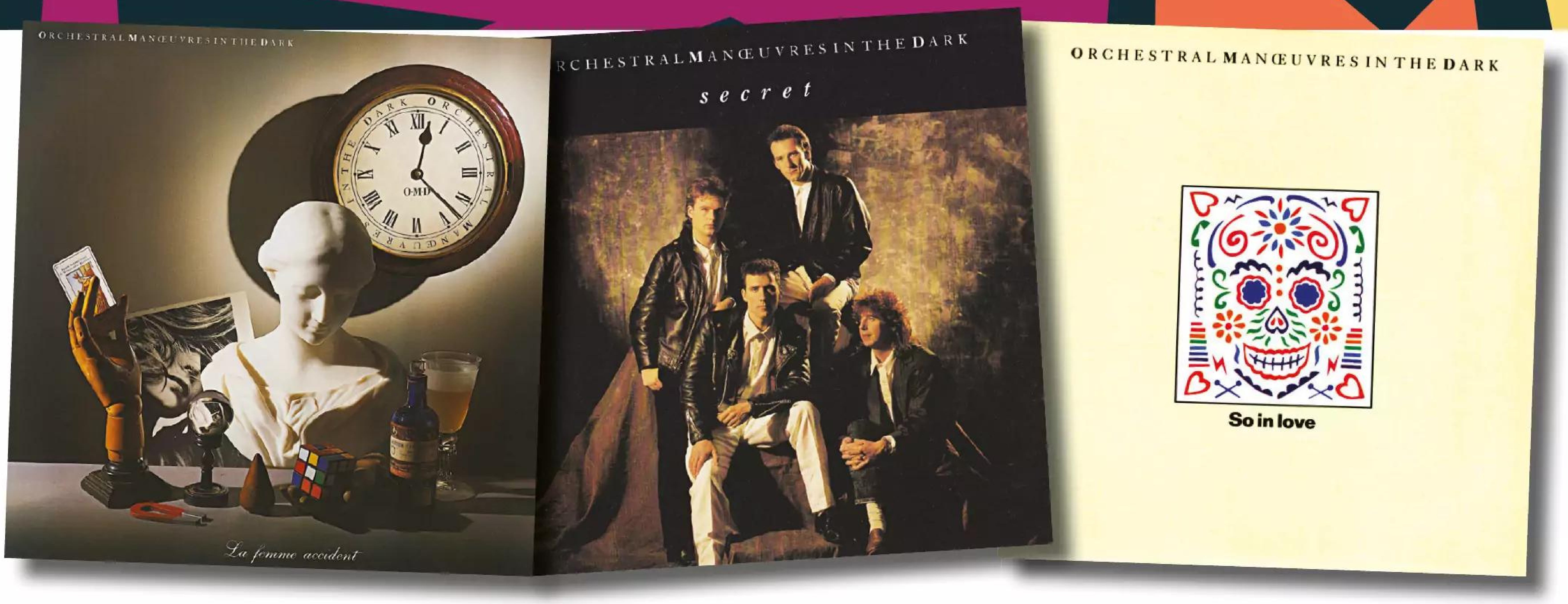
Prior to Christmas 1984, OMD's Andy McCluskey and Paul Humphreys were already scouting around for a studio to begin work on their post-Junk Culture album. They settled on Amazon Studios in Liverpool as a suitable (and local) venue of choice. During this period, the duo's chief workhorse was the Fairlight CMI, whose versatility gave the pair room to experiment and rearrange songs, particularly due to its sequencing abilities. Later, the rest of the band would come onboard and replace the Fairlight instrumentation with their own performances. Among that extended band, Neil and Graham Weir who had worked with the band for the Junk Culture tour and could turn their talents to a variety of instruments, including guitar and brass. "We were looking for a more band-type sound" as Paul Humphreys described the arrangement, "since a lot of people have been telling us for ages that they like the way we sound on stage." Equally, Mal Holmes, whose percussion skills had always been an essential element of live OMD, was let loose in the studio to give the new songs some of that vital live power.


ORCHESTRAL MANŒUVRES IN THE DARK
CRUSH

During the album's initial writing phase, Andy and Paul's work schedule proved to be quite industrious with the pair averaging one new composition every two days over a two-month period. As the songs began to pile up, there was also a definite theme emerging in terms of lyrical narratives, inspired in part because Andy McCluskey was in the throes of a new relationship. In fact the title of Crush was a nod to the amount of love songs on the album.

The recording sessions for Crush took place in spring 1985 and saw the band returning to The Manor Studios in Oxfordshire (where they had previously recorded their classic album Architecture & Morality). With a bigger band and a more organic approach to recording, they were also in the market for a producer to lend the album some oversight. Enter Stephen Hague, notable at the time for his work for the likes of Malcolm McLaren. Hague certainly brought in some essential technical skills, although there were some later quibbles on his perfectionist approach for the album, including from Andy McCluskey, "it seemed to have lost a little vitality because he picked over it for so long – he went for that 'perfect' sound, smoothing all the rough edges." It didn't help that tensions were high in the studio, exacerbated by the long hours and the slow process of recording and mixing.

As the album began to shape up, the crucial process of track selection was also underway – not easy when the band had recorded so many songs. Some material was set aside for B-side tracks, while others were jettisoned completely. This included 'Heaven Is', an older composition that had first been conceived in the initial post-Dazzle Ships period, but which the band couldn't


ORCHESTRAL MANŒUVRES IN THE DARK
La femme accident
ORCHESTRAL MANŒUVRES IN THE DARK
secret
ORCHESTRAL MANŒUVRES IN THE DARK
So in love

quite shape up to their expectations. Another track that didn't make the cut was 'Southern', a co-write between Andy and Graham Weir (a version of 'Southern' would later be revived on the band's 1986 album The Pacific Age).

OMD's softer approach during this period often invited scepticism, yet despite the more commercial direction the band were ploughing, they were still keen to experiment with ideas. '88 Seconds', for example, had been inspired by a documentary on an attack perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan on an anti-Klan march in Greensboro, North Carolina. The song's surprisingly powerful delivery was also helped by the song being recorded live in the studio. Similarly, the epic 'The Native Daughters of the Golden West' demonstrated OMD's ability to craft imaginative and dramatic songs. "I had visions of pioneer women and valley girls moving across the American West in covered wagons" as Andy described it.

While on tour in Japan the previous year, Andy had recorded hours of TV adverts that had caught his attention. Some of these recordings were chopped up and sequenced to form the foundation for the melancholic title track on Crush. Its mesmerising sound was bolstered by some downbeat vocals from Andy alongside an impromptu trombone solo from Graham Weir. The album's varied sound bounces from introspective moments like this to the choppy word salad of 'Bloc Bloc Bloc' and the yearning ballad of 'Hold You' (mooted as a possible single at one point).

In May 1985, the album's first single presented the shimmering synth soundscape of 'So In Love', a pure pop song augmented by Martin Cooper's lush sax fills. The track, co-written with Stephen Hague was one of the last things written for the album, a song that Andy summed up succinctly: "it's about the painful end of a relationship." Not that these emotive ideas were appreciated by the press. Record Mirror scathingly described the single as "disappointingly throwaway", while Smash Hits responded with "Give us another 'Enola Gay' lads!" Despite this, a series of colourful 12" releases and picture disc formats helped to nudge it up the charts, ultimately peaking at No. 27. Meanwhile, in the US, the single managed to capture the attention of a growing market, reaching No. 16 on the Billboard Dance Club chart.

Follow-up single 'Secret' served up a wistful, perky pop outing with Paul Humphreys on vocal duties, a song that also saw Paul's then-wife Maureen sampled for the "secret" lyrical element (the band had built a sizeable library of go-to samples for this very purpose). A later third single release, the pastoral charms of 'La Femme Accident', was probably over-mining the album, particularly when it failed to make the top 40.

When Crush arrived in June 1985, its Edward Hopper-inspired sleeve art embraced an evocative, middle America quality that centred around two car-bound lovers that could only stir the listener's imagination. While some of the press had been critical about the single releases, there were some thumbs-up for the parent album. Smash Hits commented on "strong, melodic songs" and concluded "it's a welcome return of the thinking-person's dance music." Meanwhile, Melody Maker also came out on-side, "as a pop record it's sublime, intricate and unyieldingly persuasive." Other voices were more critical, with the NME describing the album as "dull geometry". Nonetheless, Crush reached No. 13 in the UK album charts. Meanwhile, US interest was picking up, particularly as the band had focused their attention on an extended series of live shows in America, which included support slots for The Power Station and the Thompson Twins. Stateside, the band had also now signed to A&M, a large label which could provide the necessary support to boost the band's fortunes. Previously, OMD's US sales were merely moderate. Conversely, by October 1985 they had sold over 200,000 copies of Crush in America. OMD's US successes would also be reinforced by their later involvement in the film Pretty In Pink with their hit song 'If You Leave' becoming their signature tune for American audiences.

OMD's musical identity had certainly moved far away from their imperial era releases, but the plan to crack America in 1985 had largely been successful. Crush emerged as a perfect vehicle for effective pop songs which swiftly found their audience. At the same time, there were still elements of the quirkier, edgier OMD present to keep diehards interested. OMD's 'American album' continues to confound and delight people even four decades later.

Mal Holmes reminisces, "I enjoyed recording Crush. I've only got good memories of spending many hours behind a drum kit in the wonderful stone room at The Manor. Crush did the job it was meant to do: it opened the doors to America and helped give the band a new lease of life. The band's "Hollywood years" that followed Crush are another chapter in OMD's rich story". ●

CLAUDIA BRÜCKEN
NIGHT MIRROR

Demon Music Group

Claudia Brücken night mirror
Claudia Brücken

The narrative that foregrounds Claudia Brücken is set deeply in the misty hue of nostalgia thanks to Propaganda’s epoch-defining 1985 album A Secret Wish. Claudia’s darkly transcendent vocals have become an invocation for that particular moment, her matter-of-fact Teutonic tones offering an alternative cool to the mid-80s Americanised vocal affects that saturated the pop scene at the time.

When in 2022 Claudia reunited with Propaganda co-vocalist Susanne Freytag and A Secret Wish producer Stephen Lipson as xPropaganda, the freshness and beauty of the new album The Heart is Strange was almost missed under weight of hysteria for that nostalgia.

Night Mirror opens with a statement that throws the bondage of nostalgia into the cultural wastebin. “My life started today,” she says. “What happened before doesn’t matter. It’s of little consequence…” which sets the tone perfectly for this ten-track set of delicate torch song vignettes; an album of human warmth that says farewell to the past with a loving embrace and a friendly wave… a step forward into a brilliant future.

Not that she has suddenly embraced an entirely new style and disappeared into the depths of the avant-garde, or even the shallows of contemporary electropop. No, this is Claudia embracing a positivity and applying it to her trademark blend of electro soundscapes with scene-setting pianos and guitars. It’s adult orientated synth pop with songs that don’t shy away from growing older, but embrace the deeper understanding and wider questioning that comes with age. This is Claudia living in the present - a precious moment of heartwarming calm.

Despite numerous collaborative albums as Act with Thomas Lear, Onetwo with OMD’s Paul Humphries, as well as releases in partnership with Andrew Poppy and another with Jerome Froese (son of Tangerine Dream founder Edgar Froese), Night Mirror is somewhat surprisingly only her third solo album of all original material. With producer John Williams retained from her previous solo album Where Else… a sense of continuity is ensured, despite the thematic break from the past.

‘My Life Started Today’ provides a lyrical theme and also sets the tone musically for the album. It opens with strings drawing a regular rhythm as a backdrop to melodic violins and piano until a bassline brings in guitars that evoke the tone of Bolan’s work on Bowie’s ‘The Prettiest Star’. Claudia’s demand in conversation with herself to throw away the shackles of the past and embrace new spaces are both life affirming and forlorn, as if pointing to a darkness that still sits at the heart of the positive present. The epic organ and guitar solo outro only adding to the song’s sentiment

The fusion of synths, guitars and organ continue with ‘Rosebud’ which seems to confine the past to naive picture book imagery in order to reveal the changing flows of a river, here used as a metaphor for both ecological disaster and spiritual growth, before emerging into the ‘All That We Ever Have’ with deploys a celebration of love through streams of piano motifs, skittering beats and a chorus that’s pure addictive gold.

The opening trio of songs set up the atmosphere for the entire album with Claudia’s naturally melancholic tones embracing life affirming melodies over richly textured canvases. The effect is of solitude among crowds, or inner calm among outer chaos. A sense of thoughts and images racing through your brain in the lonely and contemplative hours of darkest night.

Take ‘Funny the Things’ with its Latin grooves, synth arpeggios and insanely ABBA-esque chorus which deals the joi de vivre of people and things that “still amaze me”, despite the details that are lost to fading memory. Or the Flamenco stylings of ‘Sincerely’ which explores those relationships that creep up on you through the unexpected sense of missing someone she simply “wanted to have fun with”. The gorgeous ‘To Be Loved’ is a love song to falling in love which flows and grows though aching pianos, sighing fretless bass and guitars that glisten and fly… both elegiac and radiant.

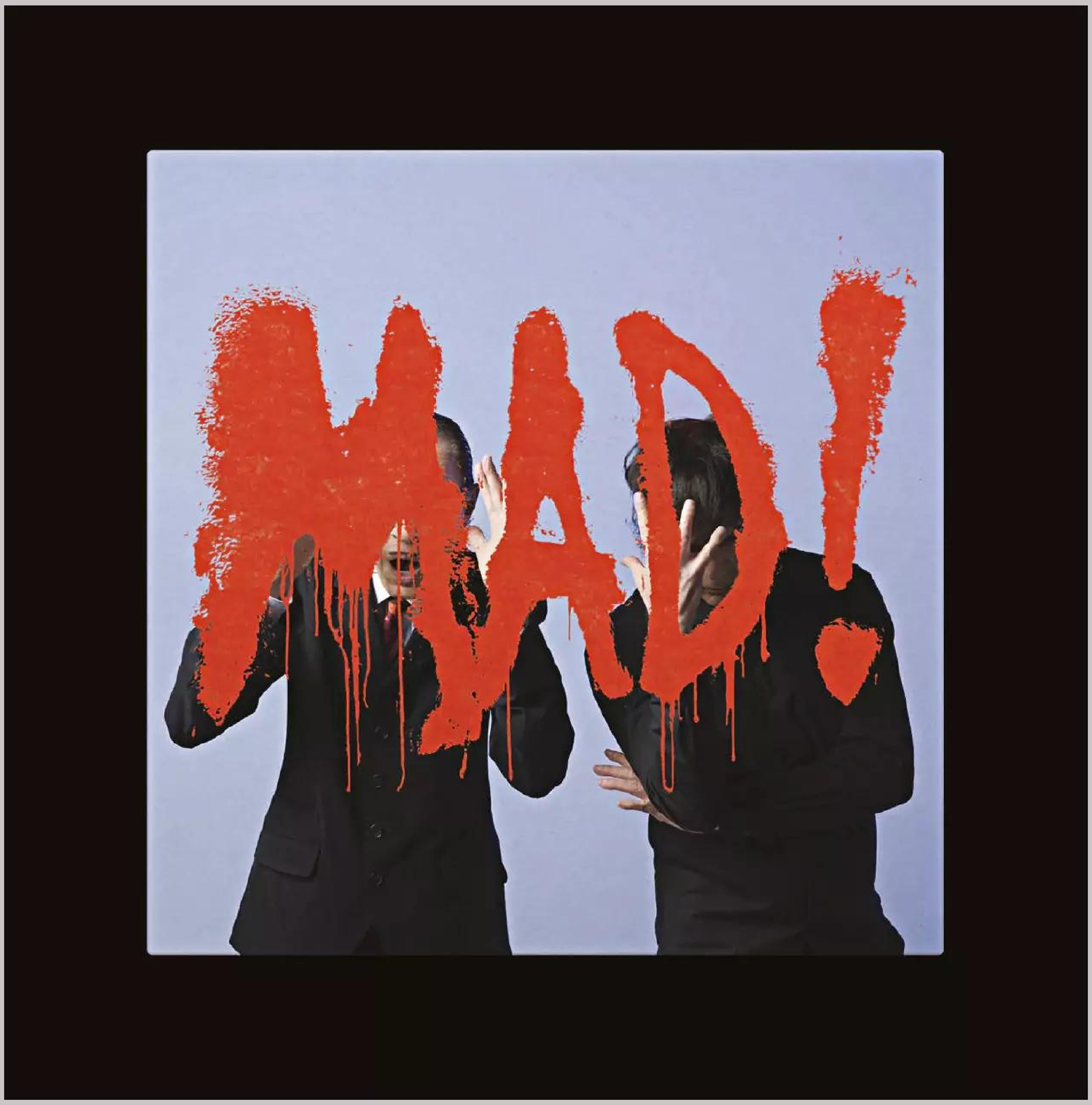
Perhaps the most upbeat tracks on Night Mirror are the dark club soundtrack ‘Shadow Dancer (Part 1)’ and it’s lighter, dreamscaped reflection ‘Dancing Shadow’ which offer reflective pieces that travel through the twilight hours of hedonism. The latter being the perfect closer to the album with its evocative ambience of dancing alone in and with the shadows and wringing out every last drop of emotion from the experience.

Night Mirror is a beautiful album, marrying the light and dark, and the noise and quiet of personal reflection with the demands of honest expression through a series of songs that drip with hooklines, swoon with melody and ache with the joys of a life lived, loved and embraced in the moment rather than lost to a nostalgic past. ●

Martin James

SPARKS
MAD!

Transgressive Records



I remember discovering Sparks as a teen, becoming a huge fan and buying everything I could. I still wish I knew what happened to my 'Tryouts For The Human Race' 12 inch blue vinyl with the playable label. In my old band Freak UK we did a cover of 'The Number One Song In Heaven' and that area is still a personal fave. If I'm honest I haven't kept up with their recent releases so I clicked play on MAD! Rather keen to find out how they've changed over the years.

Well, I'm rather pleased to find they haven't changed too much. The tunes, the clever lyrics and the mixture of the Ron and Russel magic, it's all there and all rather wonderful. 'Do Things My Way' has elements of old school cut up electronica, banging into your head. 'JanSport Backpack' is.... WEIRD AS! Gorgeous synth chords, and stunning vocals but it's just weird beyond weird. 'Hit Me, Baby' has a punky kinda feel, clattering drums, fuzz guitars and spiky vocals, makes you wanna pogo while chanting "La, La, La, La, La La". 'Running Up A Tab At The Hotel For The Fab' has a Surfin Bird vibe, synthtastic Cramps that reaches some operatic highs. It's becoming clear that MAD! Is, well, mad. Crazy baby.

'My Devotion' starts and it feels like a respite from the full frontal attack of strange. A proper song, well, if you ignore the lyrics. Arpeggios that make you fly, and a chorus to sing to the one you love just to see their face. 'Don't Dog It' has that Foreheads In A Fishtank disjointed strangeness, still catchy but you feel a little like something is out of sync. 'In Daylight' returns to a song feel, with a touch of gospel and just perfect synths. A dreamy joy with a witty edge. Everyone looks good at night? Too right. Fave so far. 'I-405 Rules' has elements of what would happen if 'This Town' had a baby with Britney's 'Toxic'. Honestly, this album is the musical equivalent of a breakdown. It's making my head spin. 'A Long Red Light' opens with clever synth detuning and strings lulling you into a false sense of security, but no. It also goes full head*** in the blink of an eye. This strangeness just keeps building too. Argh. 'Drowned In A Sea Of Tears', the new single, does go back to the Sparks tradition of great songs with a quirky twist but with the unnervingness of the album colouring the track. Like a sweet panic. 'A Little Bit Of Light Banter' highlights how being so loved in the UK has shaped Sparks. I mean a US band using the word banter? I can imagine this being sung in pubs by a room of drunk people about to go outside for a nice fight and a kebab. 'Lord Have Mercy' is like a pillow to land on after a totally terrifying roller coaster ride. Like a bottomless ball pit at the end of a parachute dive without a parachute. A sweet singalong touch a sugar. And boy you need it.

What do I think of MAD!? Er? Well, it's no 'The Number One Song In Heaven', but it's defo a Sparks release. I think this might be the perfect sound track for the modern world. It has elements of what we think of as tradition, mixed with all manner of what the heck? My head is spinning. If the aim was to capture a mental health crisis in music, to be the sing-song album for us all as we go to hell in a handcart, Ron and Russel have nailed it. All I know is after that I need a lie down in a darkened room. ●

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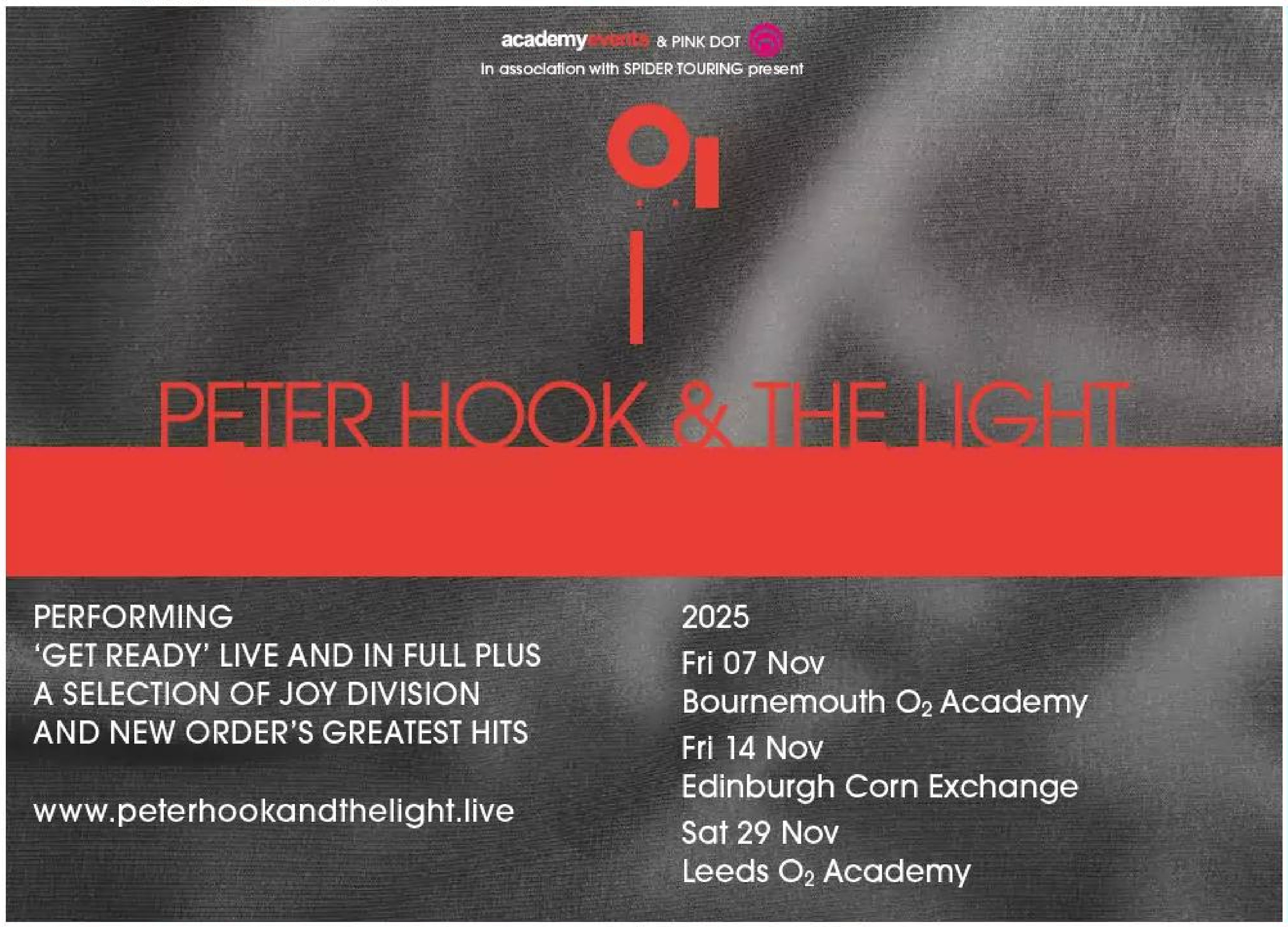
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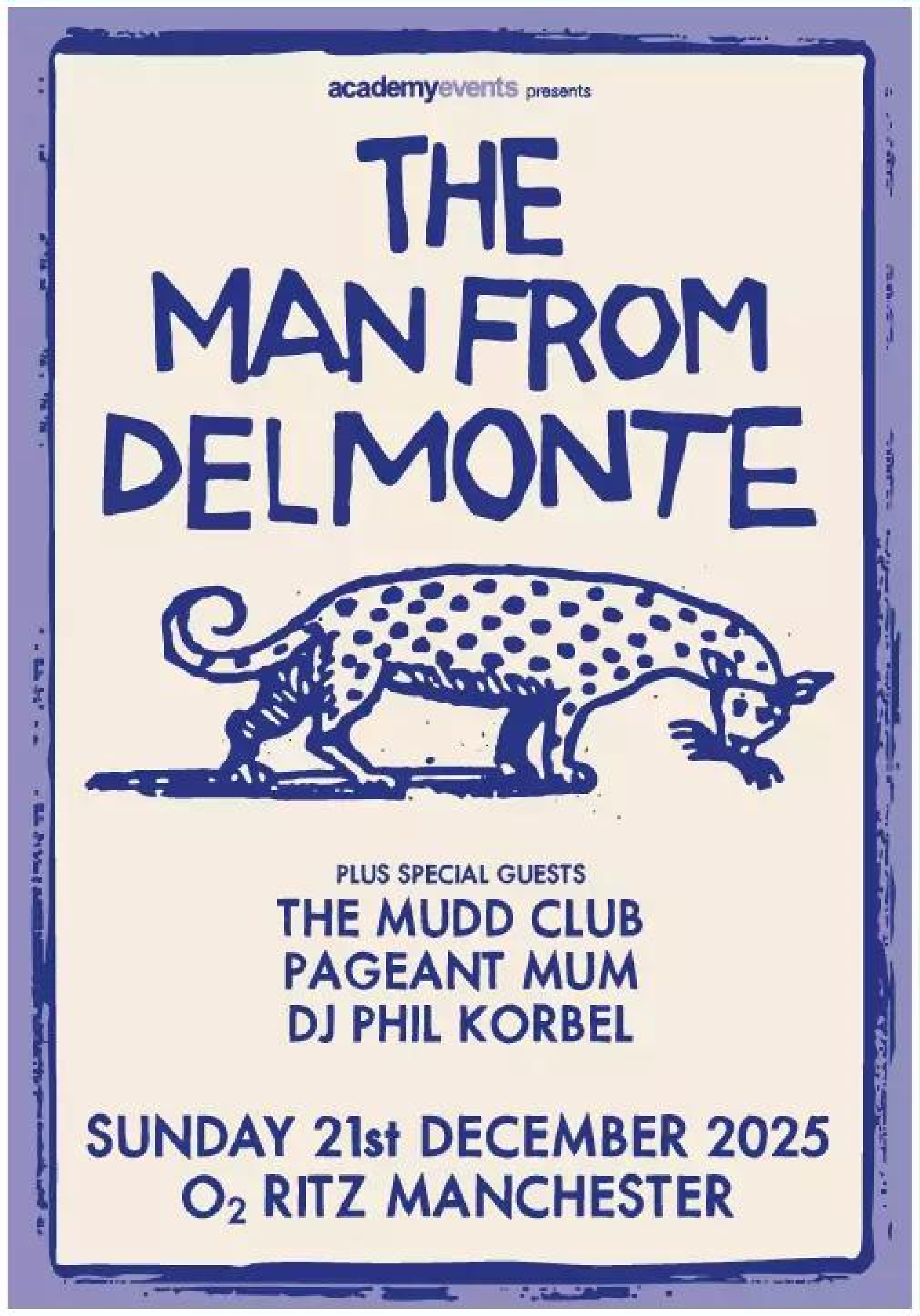
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ELECTRONIC CAFE

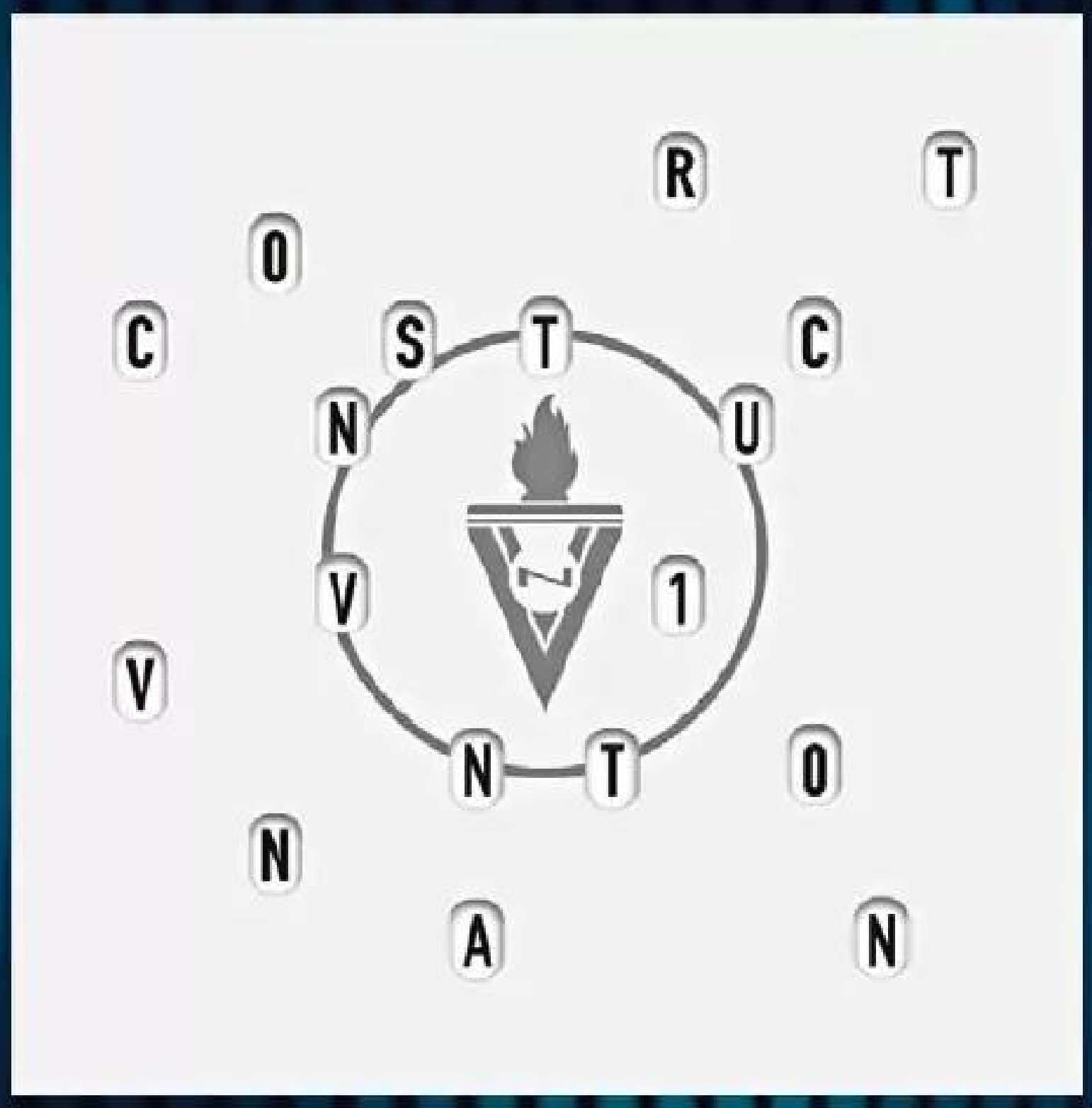
For the lovers of Electronic Music

Hi! We're Andy and Mark, who formed the Electronic Cafe four years ago for two main reasons. The first is to create a platform to showcase all the new artists. Two: Pay homage to the amazing artists who paved the way from that incredible post-punk era. We do this via our Hot Stuff episodes and albums of the year shows. We interview some of the biggest names in the industry. We are both music maniacs, digesting way more music than most and constantly looking for the best new stuff out there to make your ears happy. Now, we are also bringing live events to audiences at key London venues. Please subscribe to our YouTube channel and become a member of our Facebook community, where thousands of people are simply sharing amazing music- we're also proud to be partners of Blitzed Magazine!

B-Movie
HIDDEN TREASURES

B- MOVIE - HIDDEN TREASURES

The story behind this album is remarkable, checkout our interview with their brilliant lead vocalist and bassist Steve Hovington on the EC! So this album, despite being in the vaults of Universal 40+ years ago, still makes a hell of a sonic impact, as they say class is permanent and in this case - that quote is totally spot on. This album is classic and yet still relevant today. It totally makes you wonder why B- Movie were not huge back in the day! It should be an essential part of your record collection- buy this!



VNV NATION- CONSTRUCT

Another EC guest to watch out for, Ronan Harris the mastermind behind all things VNV has done it again! Album number 12 has the most majestic big soundscapes that you just want to drown in whilst the thumping beat of 'Silence Speaks' would go down a storm on any dancefloor! This album hits all the right sonic spots, lyrically brilliant, and is hard to fault, in fact we can't so we're just going to pop it on the turntable again, and again and again and again! Grab this!

INDIFFERI
ENCE AN
DUST

CULT WITH NO NAME - INDIFFERENCE AND DUST

Great friends of the EC Erik Stein and Jonny Boux return with album number 12, and it's a master class in brooding, melodic, beautifully crafted songs, elegantly written. Paula Gilmer from Tiny Magnetic Pets guest vocals on the majestic 'Clockout'. This is one of those bands we want all the world to hear! This album is so good, these guys deserve to be 1000 times bigger than they are. If you buy this (and you 100% should!) go and buy their back catalogue whilst telling all your friends how brilliant they are! Erik, Jonny you should be really proud of this. Dear Blitzed readers, what are you waiting for? Head to Bandcamp and download or get the CD!!! 5 Stars from us!

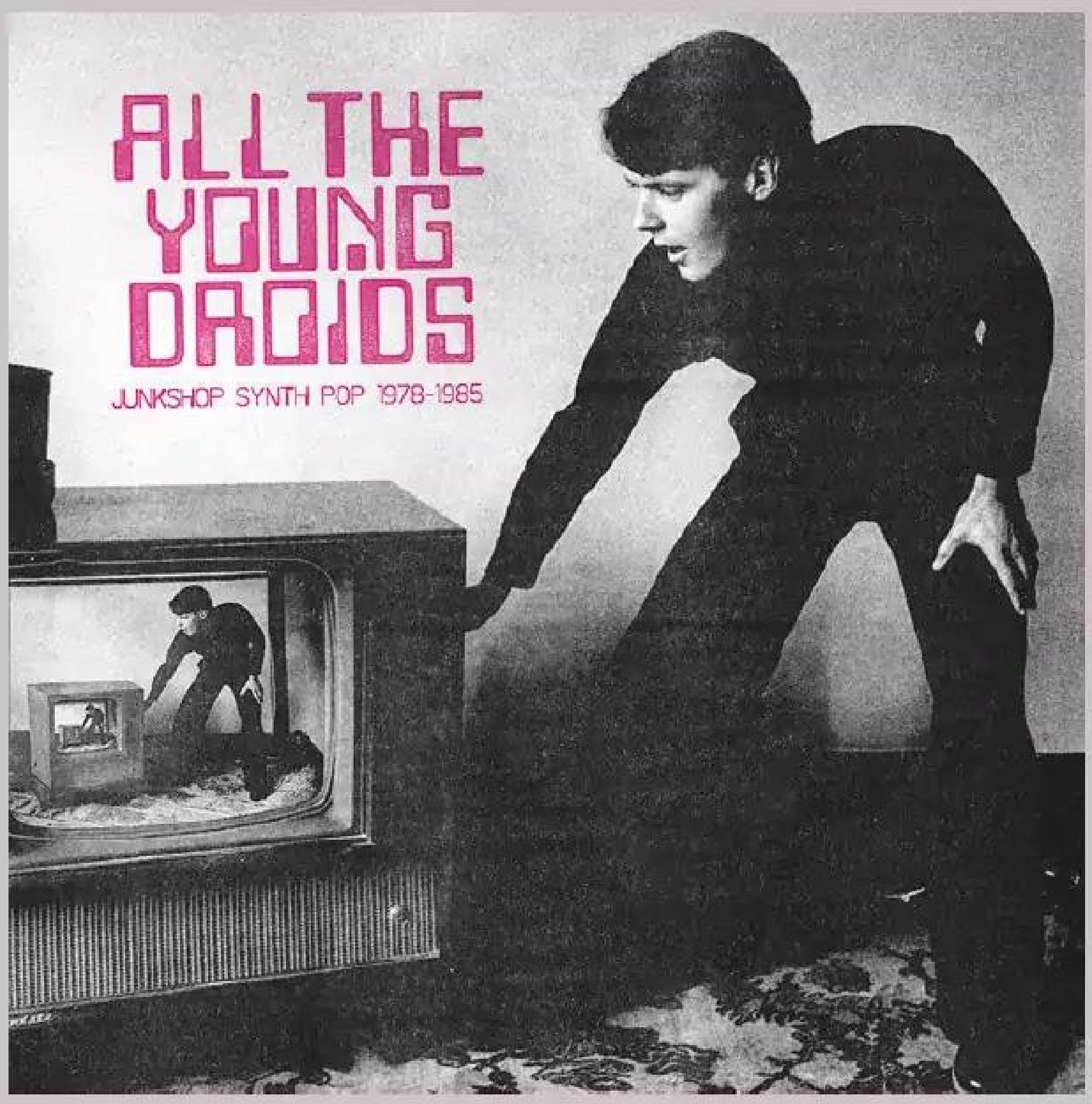
SEA FEVER - SURFACE SOUND

Tom Chapman and Phil Cunningham from New Order are back with their friends to deliver an amazing album that was written through a difficult period of Chapman's life, dealing with a breakup and the loss of his father. The New Order influence is strong here, but make no mistake they are making this their own, with catchy as hell riffs, beats and great vocals from Iwan Gronow and Beth Cassidy that add so much depth that you get to hear Sea Fever at their very best, dive into this, it's special.

Electronic Cafe Electronic.Cafe electroniccafe_music

ALL THE YOUNG DROIDS:
JUNKSHOP SYNTH POP 1978-1985

Night School Records



Glasgow-based, independent record label Night School is arguably best known for its championing of distinctive musical voices, whether that's bringing recognition to non-mainstream artists or unearthing hidden gems from releases of the past. This new release finds them very much engaging in the latter, bringing to the fore "a new compilation that charts the underbelly of the epoch-defining sound of the synthesiser in 80s popular music", according to ex-NME journalist Nick Kent (who wrote the release's accompanying description).

The album includes 24 tracks in total, ranging from charmingly raw, low-fi recordings to highly polished productions with sumptuous synthesiser textures and bold melodic hooks. There's a fair range of musical styles featured too; although the tracks all clearly incorporate electronics, the array of directions in which they take this basic premise truly boggles the mind. There's blatant, straight-down-the-line synth-pop in the form of John Howard's 'I Tune Into You', for instance, a nifty little single from 1980 complete with space-age verses and a simplistic but euphoric chorus. There's minimal electro on the likes of Disco Volante's 'No Motion', which is based around cold, rattling rhythms, single-note synth melodies and mannered vocals ("no motion in your mind / no emotion in your eyes"). Some of the tracks, meanwhile, are so zany they quite literally defy categorisation, a case in point being the Gerry & the Holograms' eponymous single, which sees unnervingly dense, swirling synthesisers settling over spoken-word, robotic vocals. It's not all hidden gems, but you will certainly be hard pushed to find at least one song that doesn't align with your preferred kind of synth-pop.

In fact, taken as a whole this compilation doesn't just shine a light on overlooked tracks of the era, but rather reveals an entirely different perspective on the genre of synth-pop as a whole. Whilst the Depeche Mode's and the Yazoo's of the world were writing the hits, the artists featured on this compilation were developing a parallel world: a DIY ambition, sonic curiosity and sheer eccentricity - and for the most part, it's an absolute joy to discover. ●

Imogen Bebb
www.nightschoolrecords.com

THE BLUEBELLS
SISTERS (2025 REISSUE)

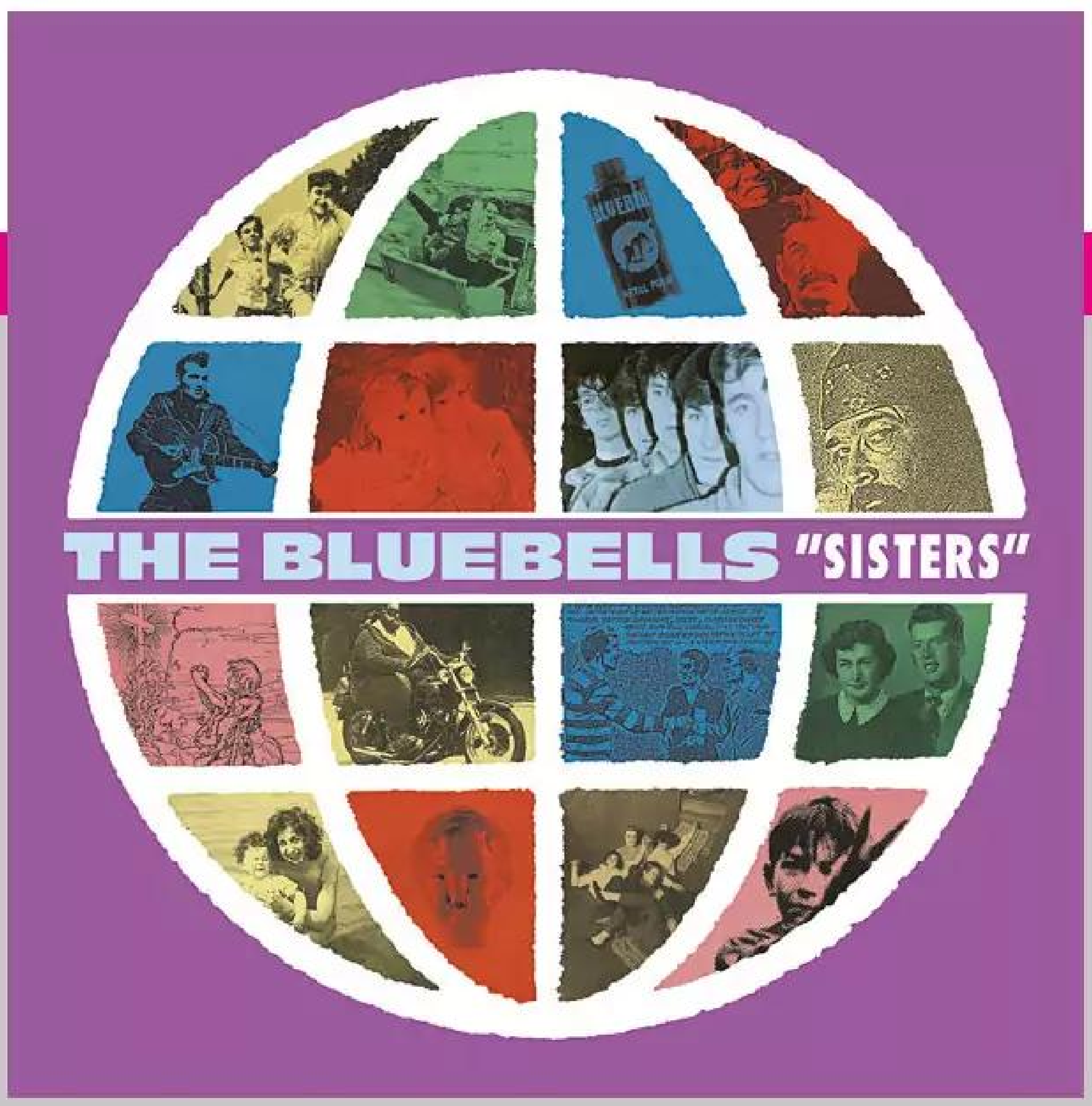
LONDON RECORDS

Fans of The Bluebell's 1984 debut have been well served in recent years, with a reissue via LNFG, and a two-disc version on Cherry Red. Now, this much loved Indie classic returns home to original label London Records, delivering what is surely the last word with a double LP and expansive four-disc CD/DVD box set.

The set continues London's excellent recent run of well-curated reissues, with a reordered track listing, bonus discs of B-sides, non-album tracks, live and extended versions, previously unreleased BBC sessions and early takes. Promos and memorable BBC performances from the Old Grey Whistle Test and Top Of The Pops have been restored for the DVD.

Back in the day, The Bluebells were very much part of the Scottish Indie Pop ecosystem, spiritual kin to Aztec Camera, Altered Images and Orange Juice; illustrious company in which they more than held their own. Considering it had no less than five producers (including one E. Costello), Sisters is a remarkably cohesive album. By turns folky, poppy and soulful, it avoids the traps of twee janglepop with a hint of grit and a tight band sound honed by live work.

It was always about more than that Big Hit, 'Young At Heart'. 'Falling' is just as much an earworm, and 'Everybody's Somebody's Fool' wears a love for '60s pop on its sleeve, recalling the raw, naïve charm of early Beatles, as does the dreamy longing of 'Some Sweet Day'.'Learn To Love' adds punchy brass and guest Eddi Reader belting it out on backing vox, while 'Will She Always Be Waiting?' is lush pop classicism with strings that sweep and flutter. Working class political bite is evidenced on 'South Atlantic Way', a commentary on the Falklands War, and Troubles lament 'The Patriot Game'.



After decades of brief, sporadic reunions, the core trio is now on active service again. Following the warm and graceful second LP In The 21st Century, released in 2023, The Bluebells are touring and reportedly at work on a third album. But Sisters is where the journey began: over 40 years young and still a spring in its step. ●

Steven Swaby
www.thebluebells.tmstor.es

TWIN NOIR
CHAPTER 2

TWIN NOIR
CHAPTER II

As you might already know if you caught our interview with the band in the last issue, Twin Noir are a post-punk/EBM duo formed in Berlin in 2021. Comprising Cody Barcelona and Ian Volt, Chapter 2 is, as the title indicates, the duo's second album, and it is made up of twelve tracks of raw, electro-infused punk.

Second track 'Durchdrehen' (meaning to freak out, or to go insane) is as good a representative of this sound as any, blending pulsating, hypnotic electronics and tight, taut rhythms with a half-spoken, half-sung vocal. Some words are in German, some are in English, making the track feel as though it somehow occupies two worlds at once, clearly remaining rooted in the industrial underground of Berlin, but also speaking in a broader sense to those who feel disaffected by the world around them. Another highlight of the album in this regard is 'Systemfeind', a slightly heavier moment on account of its jagged guitars and grumbling bass, but one that still retains the spiky potency and momentum of early punk.

Softer, quieter moments are few and far between, as one might expect from a duo who clearly specialise in confrontational energy, although interestingly there are hints of melancholia throughout the album. Check out closing track 'Death Comes Easily' for instance, where distorted guitars and reverberating bass tones are offset with a flash of introspection via ethereal textures and a twinkling synth melody. It is certainly a pleasant surprise to hear the duo excel when revealing their more vulnerable side.

All in all, Chapter 2 sees Twin Noir staying true to their punk and EBM inspirations, whilst also broadening their horizons in terms of both their sound and lyrical themes. In this sense, the album is less a follow-up to their debut (2023's 2 Punks and a Tape Machine) and more a proverbial sharpening of their blade, finding the duo carving out a deeper space for themselves in the modern post-punk landscape. ●

Imogen Bebb
www.twinnoir.com

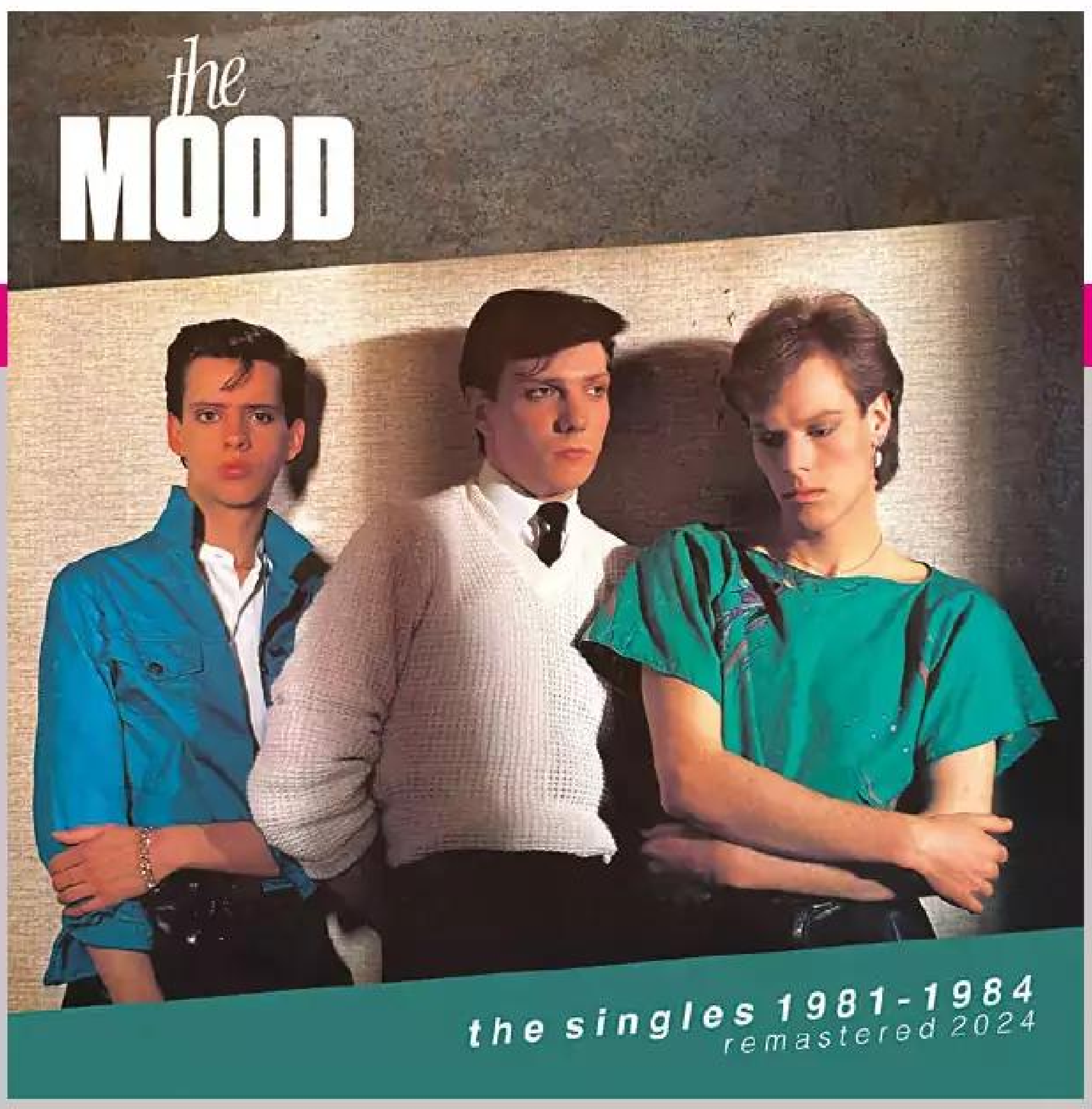
THE MOOD
THE SINGLES 1981 - 1984

SugarStar Records

The Mood were a synth-pop band formed in York in 1980. In their four-year tenure as a group they racked up three top 75 hits in the UK - 'Don't Stop', 'Paris Is One Day Away' and 'Passion In Dark Rooms' - but should arguably have achieved a lot more, as this compilation reveals. Collecting the band's singles and B-sides, as well as some rarer tracks, it serves as a compelling reminder of (or perhaps introduction to, for most listeners) the band's knack for sleek production, infectious hooks, and the kind of melancholic glamour that defined the best of early 1980s synth-pop.

One highlight in particular is 'Paris Is One Day Away' (which charted at number 42 in the UK, and therefore left the band two chart positions away from being considered for Top of the Pops). With its shimmering synthesiser textures, steady electronic rhythms and polished hooks, the track simultaneously connotes nostalgia and futurism, making it both evocative of the era and strangely timeless. It's a theme that permeates much of the group's material; both 'Watching Time' and 'The Munich Thing' are steeped in a similar cinematic atmosphere, whilst moments such as 'I Don't Need Your Love Now' and 'Don't Stop' add anthemic choruses into the mix.

Overall, meanwhile, what is most striking about this collection is how fully formed the band's sound feels, even across the B-sides and rarities that are included here. Say what you like about the style of music the band made, but few can deny that there is a clear identity running through every track here - one of cool, stylish detachment balanced out with an emotional undercurrent of yearning vocal



deliveries and crystalline synths. If you're still not convinced, check out 'Passion in Dark Rooms', an incredibly catchy slice of synth-pop that should have been a huge hit. It's one of many standout moments on a compilation that not only rightly reviews The Mood's overlooked legacy, but also makes a strong case for their place in the broader story of British pop's electronic evolution. ●

Imogen Bebb
www.themood.uk

BRUTALIST ARCHITECTURE IN THE SUN
DESOLATION STREET

desolation street
brutalist
architecture
in the sun

Regular BAITS listeners will recognise the title Desolation Street from their last album Loneliness Kills. But don't expect a part two of that album. A decade since Dean Clarke delivered debut album All is Grey, Desolation Street takes all of the trademark elements of cold wave and concrete pop in powerful new directions, once again delivered with high intelligence and extreme wit.

The latest from the now customary duo of Dean on production and occasional vocals, and author Cye Thomas on vocals takes the listener through a high-speed drama that combines maximum tension and powerful invention. Take the brilliant single 'Drive By Suicide' that wraps 1979's electropunk modular simplicity in the emotive energy of the roughneck beats of late 80s UK proto-rave to soundtrack a J.G. Ballard story. Or 'Mind Disorder' and 'Face//Down' which blend 1989 style Orbital with The Normal, and opener 'AllForNought' that plays the same trick but with added Meat Beat Manifesto and a snarling anti-guns rap. Yep, you read that right, a rap. And it works.

The change in vocal delivery immediately hits. Previously Cye's often saccharine style acted as the spoonful of sugar before the medicine of the lyrics hit you. Words about social collapse, emotional distress, or political destruction initially come over like love songs, but closer listening to the brilliant words reveal a leather cosh lurking beneath the velvet glove of Cye's voice.

Here though the vocals are much more direct. They are at times devoid of emotion, at others simply angry. It's an effect that becomes exaggerated through the far less disciplined approach to pitch and melody that simply add to the drama and maximise impact. The ugly beauty of 'Everything Must Die' melts Cye's highly mannered Bowie-esque exclamations over prime M25 rave grooves and the brittle combination of distorted spoken word and wayward distant melody on 'Do I Have to Play Your Game' over pounding industrial techno beats are points at hand.

There are some people that think music and politics shouldn't mix while there are others that see all music as inherently political. Brutalist Architecture in the Sun are in the latter camp. And thank whatever god you believe in for that.

Desolation Street is a brilliant album that shouts loud and raves louder, that hits hard and twists harder. It's bitter, it's full of despair, it's angry, and it demands change. ●

Martin James

www.brutalistarchitectureinthesun.bandcamp.com

KIFFIE
APPROACHING THE HORIZON

KIFFIE
APPROACHING THE HORIZON

Are we falling in love or into a black hole"? So asks Norwich-based producer Kiffie on his 20th album Approaching the Horizon, which also happens to be the third and final instalment of his much-celebrated 'Home' trilogy.

Drawing on genres including electronica and dark wave (with a serving of synth-pop thrown in for good measure), from the outset the album is simultaneously warm and cold, the rich textures of synths like the Roland JX-08 and the Korg Opsix blending with the artist's cool, distant vocal delivery. Kiffie's lyrical fascination with emotional isolation and digital-age romance have certainly carried over from his previous releases too, although in terms of its music Approaching the Horizon definitely feels more expansive than some of his older work. On tracks like 'The Exclusion Principle', for instance, the bold, rich tones of the synths are given space to breathe, leaving their glistening tones to dominate the sound. The intriguingly-named 'Spaghettification' is another highlight in this regard, its four to the floor rhythms and robotic vocals set against warm synth pads that seem to stretch out in front of you for light years. Elsewhere, tracks like 'United (In Fusion)' and five-and-a-half-minute opener 'Dark Matter' pulse with a sense of forward motion, pairing driving rhythms with lyrics that seem to explore the tension between connection and collapse. Kiffie's voice, usually filtered and sounding detached in some way, acts more as an extra instrument than a narrator, adding another layer to the album's sonic architecture.

So are we falling in love or into a black hole? On Approaching The Horizon, Kiffie actually suggests the answer might be both, his knack for blending the warm and the cold, the narrow and the expansive making you feel as though, even if you are tumbling through space towards inevitable oblivion, you are doing it with a song in your heart. ●

Imogen Bebb

www.kiffie.bandcamp.com

CULT WITH NO NAME
INDIFFERENCE AND DUST

No, of course you shouldn't judge an album by its cover, but admit it, you often do, don't you? Well in the case of Indifference and Dust it's OK because the stunning artwork (courtesy of Disc-Phalanx) is simply an indication of the musical riches that lie within.

Something else you may do is have that special band or artist that you simultaneously want to keep all for yourself while also spreading the righteous word to everyone you know.

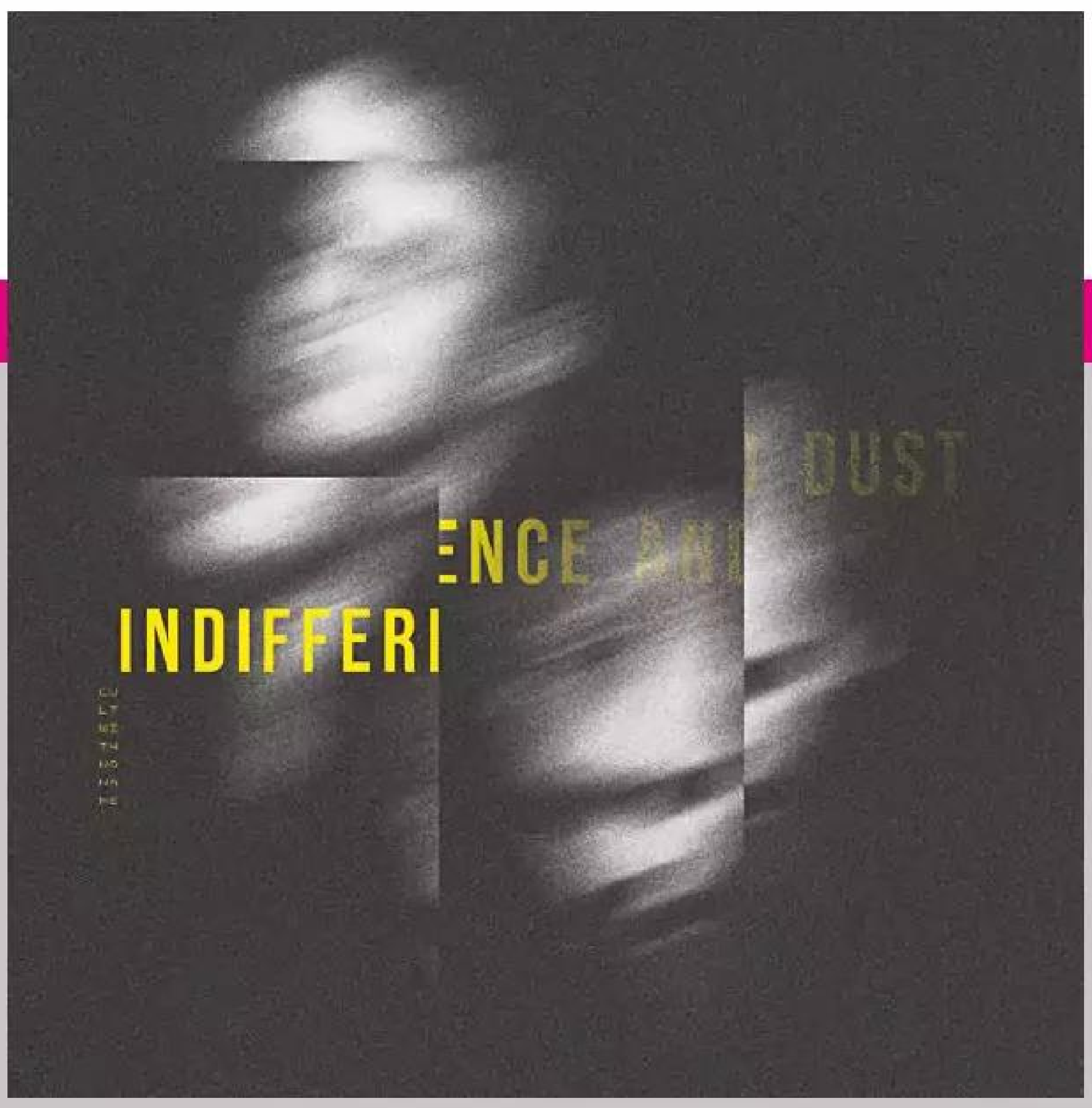
That's pretty much how I feel about Cult with No Name. Thankfully, after exposure to Indifference and Dust, I've chosen the latter option.

Unbelievably this is their 12th album, continuing a long run of very strong releases. Theirs is a back catalogue to set anyone's mouth watering, a treasure trove of the kind of songs you didn't think were being written anymore. I'm actually struggling to identify any existing acts that can compete. Hyperbole? Just listen and let me know.

Indifference and Dust glides over the horizon with the lush, stately drift of "Running (In and) Out of Time". An elegy for lost days, Erik Stein's vocals perfectly measured alongside John Boux's spectral piano, a burbling synth and layers of electronics.

It's Cult With No Name in microcosm: elegant, enveloping and rich in melodic detail. Each track staking out its own claim for your attention, emphatically not an album of 11 variations on a limited theme.

Interestingly the title track digs further into the theme of life inexorably slipping away, but woven into the album's chronophobia is the acknowledgement of a world falling deeper into conflict. Of course, Erik's dry wit manages to steer us towards eloquent rumination rather than indulgent navel-gazing but brutal reality isn't avoided.



Time blurs again on the gorgeous "Clockout", featuring additional vocals from Paula Gilmer of Tiny Magnetic Pets and in another era a natural candidate for a single.

Amidst the too often derivative world of contemporary electronic music Cult With No Name long ago staked claim to their own distinctive territory, within that zone Indifference and Dust is their Avalon - a finely wrought collection of songs collectively forming a perfect accompaniment for our disturbing times. ●

Simon Heavisides

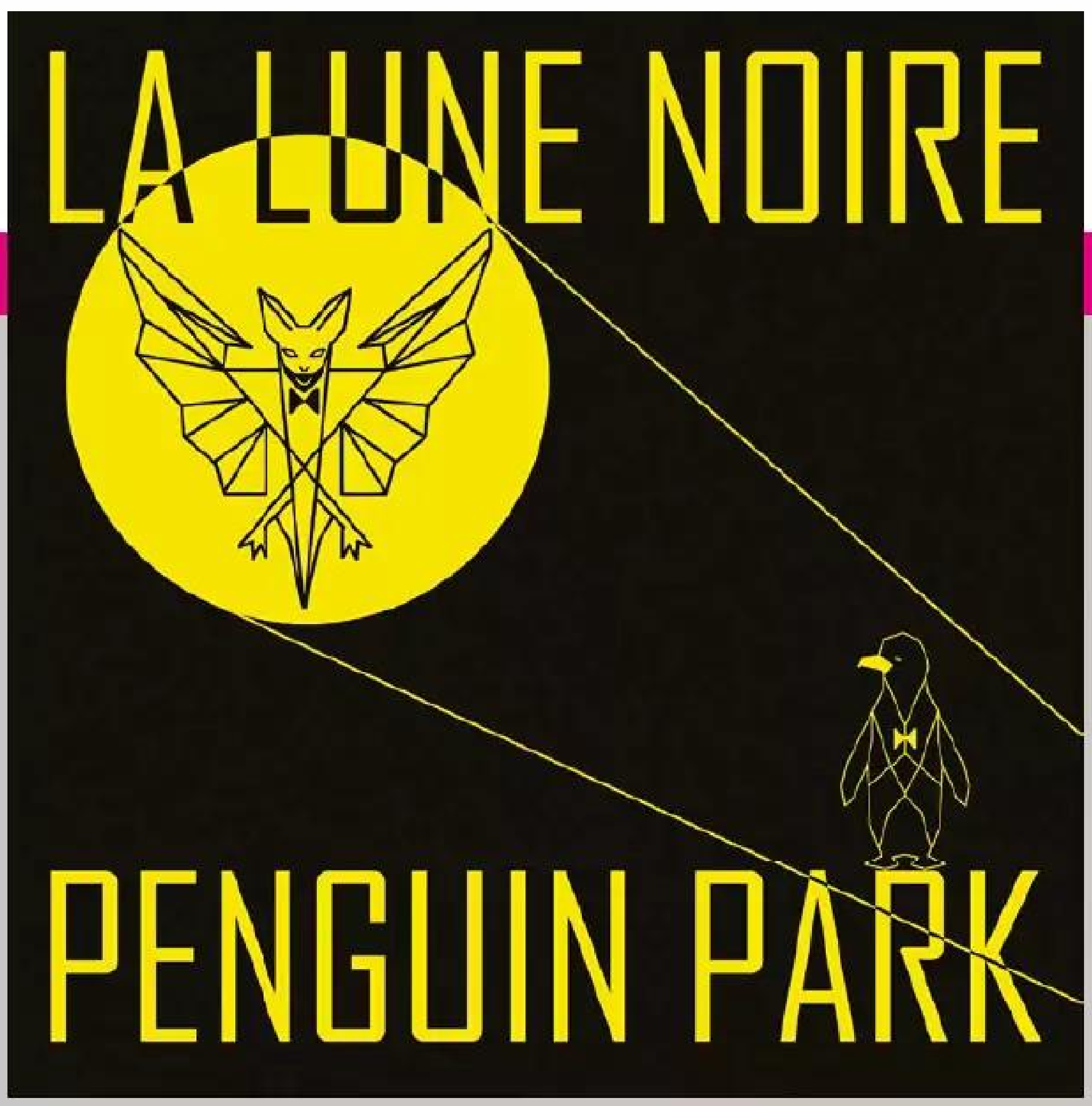
www.cultwithnoname.bandcamp.com

LA LUNE NOIRE
PENGUIN PARK

Inspired by the likes of Gary Numan, Depeche Mode and Front 242, La Lune Noire are a Dutch new wave / electro band who first started releasing music in 2009. Penguin Park is their seventh studio album to date, and it puts a genuine 1980s twist on their previous releases by using only one lead sound throughout the whole album. "Nowadays with synthesisers you have access to millions of sounds" say the band. "Victor [Verzijl, the band's songwriter] wanted to relive those days by choosing only one lead sound for the whole album. [...] So, back to basics. Not spending endless hours finding a new sound, but on writing strong melodies".

If strong melodies were what La Lune Noire were hoping for, then they've certainly come good with this release, because it's absolutely full of them. Second track 'Jack of Trades', for instance, might sound somewhat simplistic on first listen, but its distinctive synth melodies and catchy vocal refrains make it an instant earworm. 'Dragons' is another particularly strong moment, its thundering rhythms and cutting synths making it dramatic as well as memorable.

Drama is certainly a theme throughout the album more generally too; on opener 'Tearing Me Apart', Verzijl sounds as though this is exactly what's happening, considering the passion and power he puts into his vocals. Guitarist Paul Kusters is at his best on the theatrical 'Carpe Diem', his sharp stabs of guitar lending the track its sense of propulsion, whilst both keyboardist Eddie Meulmeester and drummer Sven Vogelezang shine on mid-album highlight, 'The Fire Fly', which deals chiefly in crashing rhythms and intricate synth work.



All in all, Penguin Park is a strong album that updates the familiar sound of this quartet using, oddly enough, older technology, and consequently is well worth a listen if you're a fan of electro of any kind. ●

Imogen Bebb

www.lalunenoire.bandcamp.com/

FLEETWOOD BAC

THE CLASSIC MAC SOUND, THE LOOK, THE MYSTICAL ATMOSPHERE
AND THAT INFAMOUS ON-STAGE CHEMISTRY

THE CLASSIC MAC SOUND, THE LOOK, THE MYSTICAL ATMOSPHERE
AND THAT INFAMOUS ON-STAGE CHEMISTRY

11/07 - NORTHWICH MEM COURT
12/07 - LANCASTER KANTEENA
17/07 - GALASHIELS MACARTS
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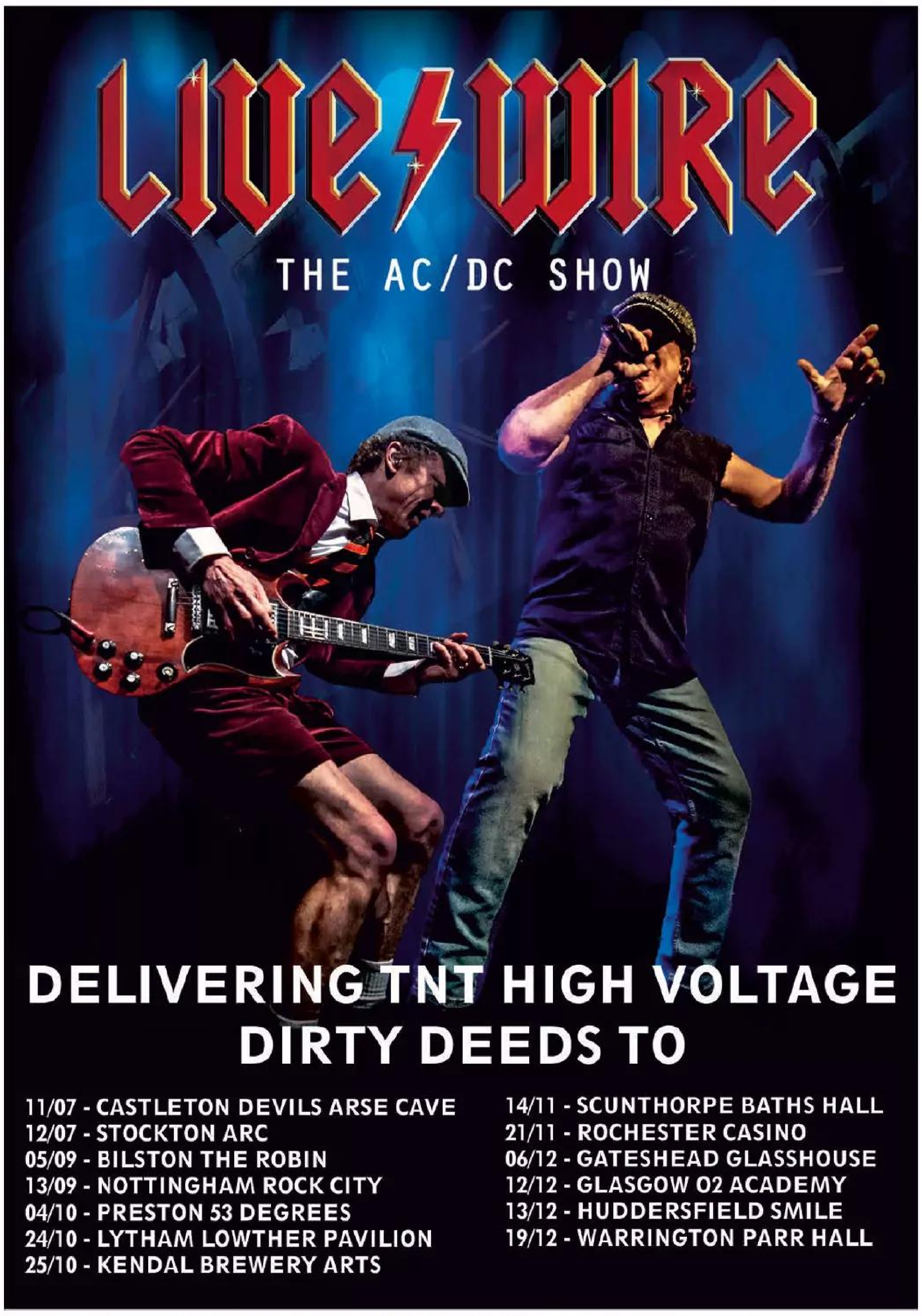
25/07 - SOUTHPORT ATKINSON
26/07 - LIANDRINDOD WELLS MID WALES PAVILION
16/08 - CASTLETON DEVILS ARSE CAVE
12/09 - BARNSLEY BIRDWELL VENUE
13/09 - CLITHEROE GRAND
19/09 - PRESTON 53 DEGREES
20/09 - LEEDS OLD WOOLLEN
17/10 - ULVERSTON CORO
18/10 - WHITLEY BAY PLAYHOUSE
07/11 - STAMFORD CORN EXCHANGE
08/11 - HARPENDEN ERIC MORECAMBE
21/11 - MIDDLESBROUGH CATHEDRAL
28/11 - HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
29/11 - BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY



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11/07 - CASTLETON DEVILS ARSE CAVE
12/07 - STOCKTON ARC
05/09 - BILSTON THE ROBIN
13/09 - NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
04/10 - PRESTON 53 DEGREES
24/10 - LYTHAM LOWTHER PAVILION
25/10 - KENDAL BREWERY ARTS
14/11 - SCUNTHORPE BATHS HALL
21/11 - ROCHESTER CASINO
06/12 - GATESHEAD GLASSHOUSE
12/12 - GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
13/12 - HUDDERSFIELD SMILE
19/12 - WARRINGTON PARR HALL

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SEPTEMBER
19 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
*20 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS**
20 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
22 LYTHAM LOWTHER PAVILION
23 SOUTHPORT ATKINSON
25 GALASHIELS MACARTS
26 HADDINGTON CORN EXCH
27 GLASGOW QMU

OCTOBER
02 LEEDS BRUDENELL
03 LEEDS BRUDENELL
04 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
05 BILSTON THE ROBIN
07 STAMFORD CORN EXCH
08 LINCOLN DRILL
09 BURY ST EDMUNDS APEX
16 ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
17 GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
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FRI 03 I CARDIFF TRAMSHED
SAT 04 I BASINGSTOKE THE HAYMARKET
SUN 05 I LINCOLN THE DRILL
THU 09 I GATESHEAD THE GLASSHOUSE
FRI 10 I STAMFORD CORN EXCHANGE
SAT 11 I MANCHESTER RNCM
THU 16 I BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
FRI 17 I WALSALL ARENA
SAT 18 I POOLE LIGHTHOUSE
SUN 19 I ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY
THU 23 I LEEDS CITY VARIETIES
FRI 24 I COVENTRY WARWICK ARTS CENTRE
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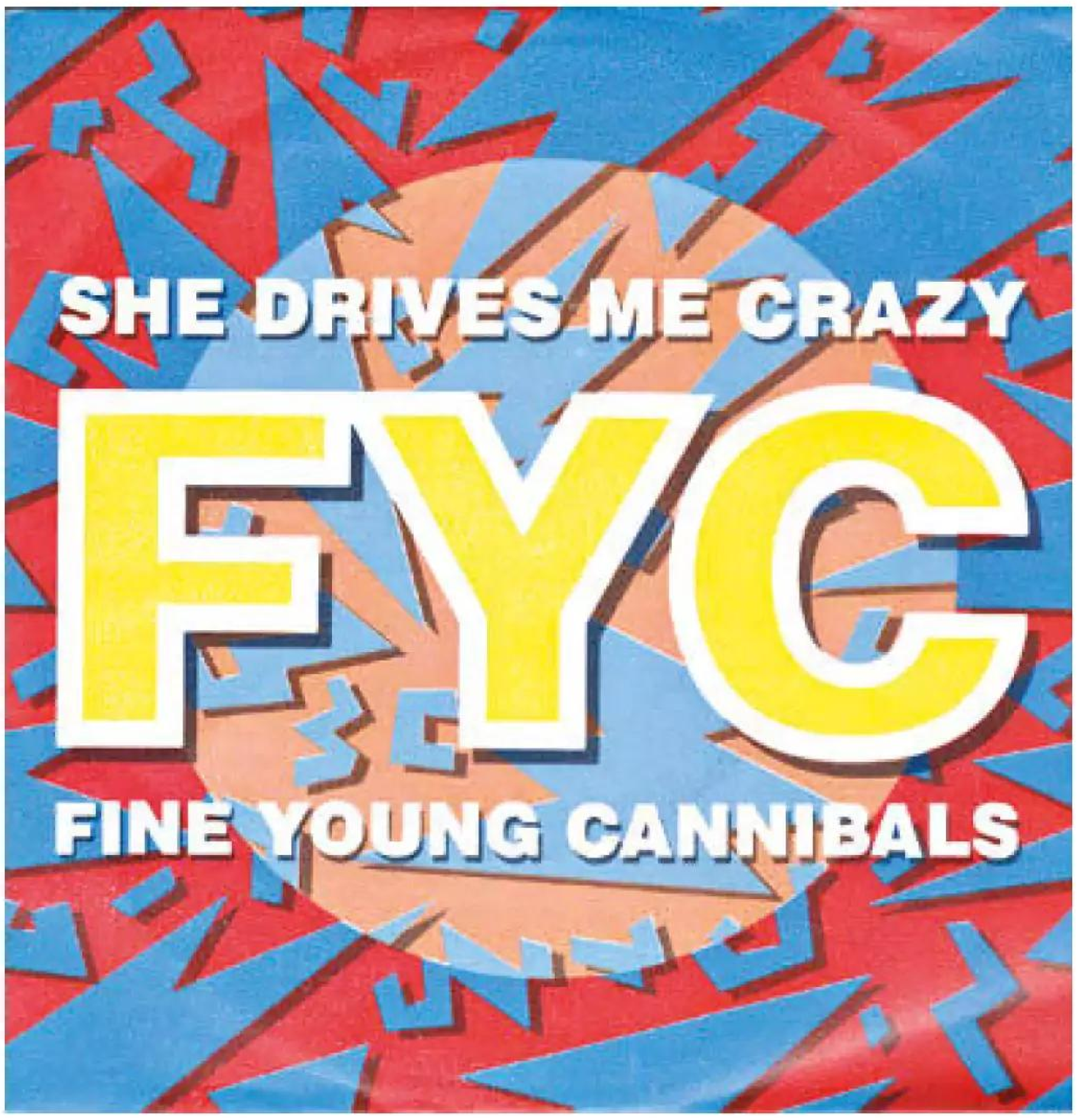
BLITZED SONGBOOK

by Imogen Bebb

‘SHE DRIVES ME CRAZY’ - FINE YOUNG CANNIBALS

In 1989, Fine Young Cannibals released their second - and what would ultimately be their last - studio album, The Raw and the Cooked. A whopping eight singles in total were released from the album, one of the most notable being 1988’s ‘She Drives Me Crazy’, a pop-rock track dominated by its bold drum rhythms, swathes of rock guitar and vocalist Roland Gift’s distinctive falsetto verses. Making number one in countries including the US, Spain, Australia and New Zealand when it was originally released, this year the song has seen something of a resurgence in popularity following its use in the new Chanel handbag advertisement, which features singers Jennie (of K-pop group Blackpink) and Dua Lipa. Its chorus lyric has become a particularly iconic part of the song - although it didn’t actually begin life as the lyric we know today. “The track started out as ‘She’s My Baby’” recalls Gift, going on to describe how the band had “the shape of the song already worked out” before they left the UK for Minneapolis to finish the album. Travelling to Minneapolis had been the suggestion of David Z, the man who had been chosen to produce the album, and who was best known for his long-standing work with Prince. In fact, it was the ‘Purple One’ who FYC originally wanted to work with, but they were told that he was not available for hire as a producer, so they said they would be willing to give his long-time collaborator Z a try instead. Z himself remembers having a meeting with the band’s then-label, London Records, regarding how FYC were going to finish a record they had already spent “an unusually long time” working on. “The [label] suggested that they come to Minneapolis [the location of Prince’s Paisley Park Studio, where Z often worked] so that they would have no choice but to work and get the record done,” he told Dan Daley of Mix Online in 2001. “The band and Z hit it off” writes Daley, “and pre-production consisted of sending songs back and forth for consideration. When what would eventually become “She Drives Me Crazy” made it into Z’s tape recorder, the melody got his immediate attention”. Z was less keen on the lyrics, however, so after some “creative arguments”, as Gift puts it, the chorus lyric was eventually changed to the now-familiar ‘She Drives Me Crazy’. “They started rewriting the lyrics to something they liked better, starting with the title, which immediately made a huge difference” says Z. “‘She’s My Baby’ is kind of a nebulous sentiment - it’s something you say, but it doesn’t hit home. ‘She Drives Me Crazy’ - now there’s something that every guy in the world has said at least once in his life with conviction.”



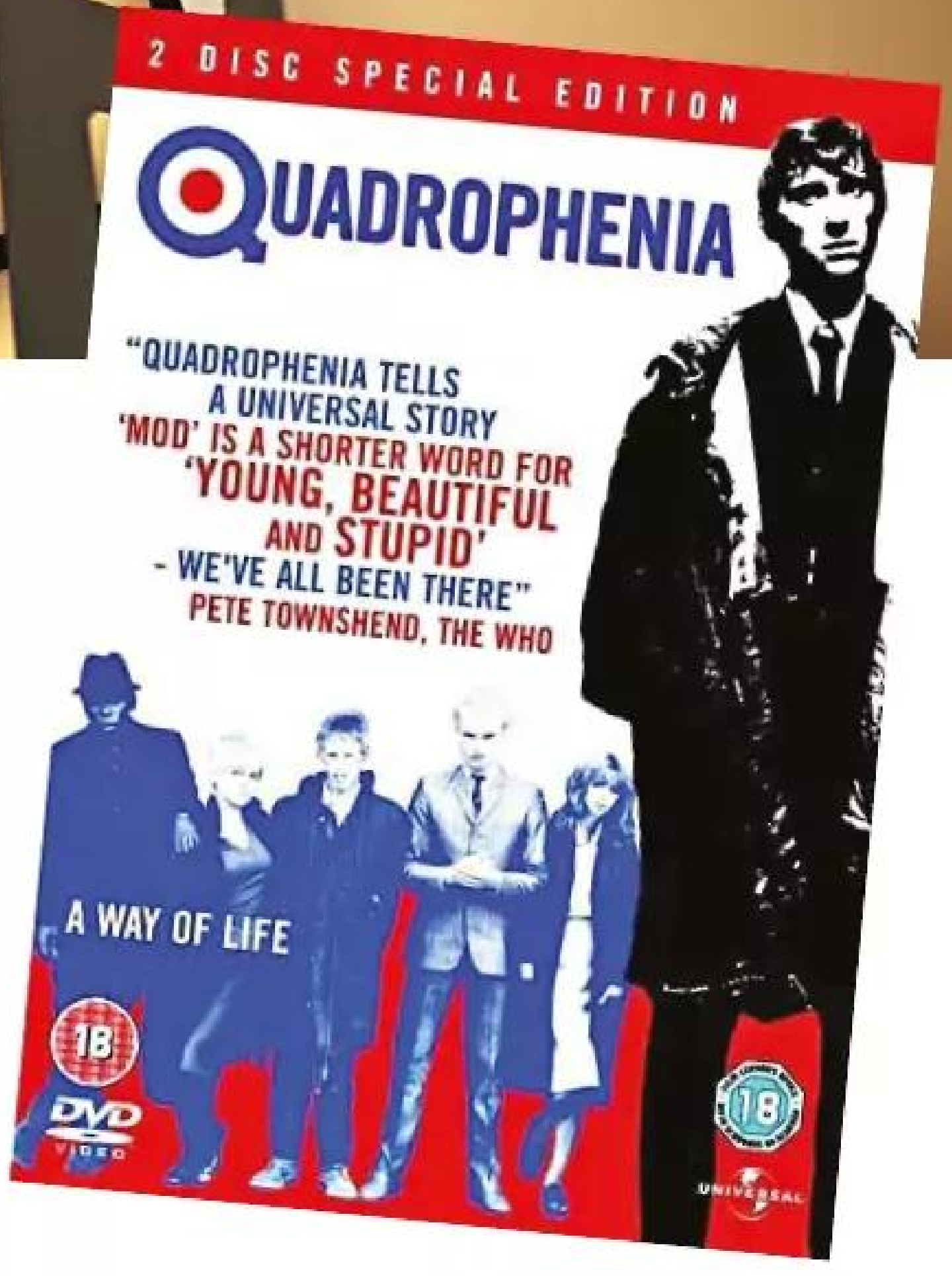
Once the track’s lyrics had been finalised, it was time for Z to work his magic in the studio - and work his magic, he did. Listening to ‘She Drives Me Crazy’, even almost four decades after its release, it still sounds unbelievably fresh, every snare crack and vocal hook leaping from the speakers as though it was recorded yesterday. This can be partly attributed to the sharp, taut, funked up sound of each element of the song, with plenty of space left between each part to allow it to shine. As Z comments: “every part on the record has a very individual and unique sound. But there aren’t many parts at all, so the space between them becomes part of the sound”.

Perhaps the most distinctive part of ‘She Drives Me Crazy’, meanwhile, is Gift’s falsetto in the verses, which the singer himself attributes to a memory of a dapper man in a Hull pub telling him he would make it as a singer if he was able to master the falsetto singing style. Gift also recalls the humorously two-faced opinion of their label’s A&R man about the song once it has been recorded. “When we came back from Minneapolis with ‘She Drives Me Crazy’”, he says, “the A&R man at the record company didn’t rate it. He said the chorus was a lyric that was pinched from Queen’s “Crazy Little Thing Called Love”. Then when it became an international hit and a number one in America, as far as he was concerned he’d loved it all along”. ●

‘Roland Gift Presents Fine Young Cannibals 40th Anniversary Tour’ Autumn 2025 on 2nd October in London and 12th November in Birmingham. Tickets: myticket.co.uk

QUADROPHENIA (1979)

By Imogen Bebb

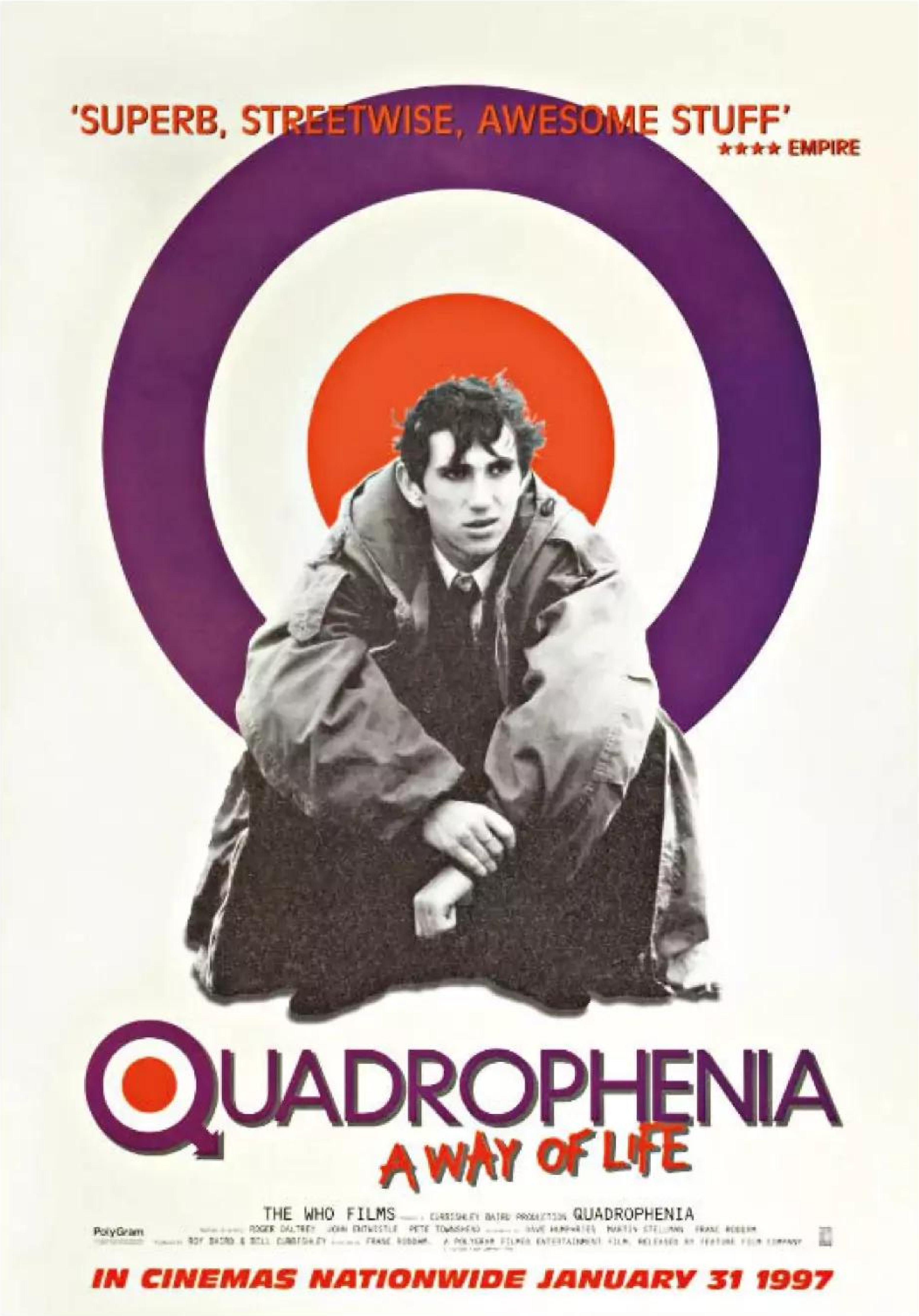

2 DISC SPECIAL EDITION
QUADROPHENIA
"QUADROPHENIA TELLS A UNIVERSAL STORY 'MOD' IS A SHORTER WORD FOR 'YOUNG, BEAUTIFUL AND STUPID' - WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE"
PETE TOWNSHEND, THE WHO
A WAY OF LIFE
18
DVD

Few films have captured the spirit of a subcultural movement as well as Quadrophenia (1979) captured the British Mod scene of the 1960s. Gritty, angsty, and steeped in cool, rebellious energy, the film documents the exploits of young London mod Jimmy Cooper, who finds himself disillusioned with his family and dead-end, 9-to-5 job. Played excellently by Phil Daniels (John Lydon was considered for the role, but the film's distributors refused to insure him), Jimmy spends his spare time brawling with members of the rival rocker gangs, taking amphetamines, riding around on his scooter and dancing until dawn, also finding time to develop a crush on Mod girl Steph (Leslie Ash), who firmly rebuffs his early advances. The climax of the film comes when Jimmy takes a bank holiday trip with his fellow Mods (including King Mod Ace Face, played by Sting) down to Brighton, where they wind up being involved in the 'mods and rockers' riots, a clash of cultures that is nowadays considered a defining moment of the early 1960s. We won't give you too many spoilers in case you have yet to see the film, but let's just say that it doesn't end with Jimmy and Steph waltzing off happily into the sunset.

If you have already seen Quadrophenia, meanwhile, you may already be aware that the film is based on The Who's 1973 rock opera of the same name. There are no 'musical numbers' in the film, per se (as in the 1975 film adaptation of the band's album Tommy), but rather ten of the songs from the original album are used in the film's soundtrack. Other tracks featured in both the film itself and the soundtrack include 'Louis Louis' by the Kingsmen, 'Be My Baby' by the Ronettes, and 'Night Train' by James Brown, selected no doubt as tracks that are representative of both pop music of the early 1960s in general, as well as the tastes of the Mod movement more specifically. The film does not star any members of the Who - again, unlike Tommy - although there are numerous Easter eggs (hidden messages or images) in the film that relate to the band. Next time you watch, keep a look out for a clip of the Who performing 'Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere' on the TV series Ready Steady Go!, posters of the band in Jimmy's bedroom, and the inclusion of the song 'My Generation' during a scene when a party is gatecrashed. Further authenticity was added with the inclusion of Jeff Dexter - a well-known dancer and DJ in London in the 1960s - as a DJ in the film's club scenes, as well as the choreographer of the hundreds of extras in the ballroom and club sequences.

Quadrophenia was directed by Franc Roddam as his feature directing debut; he would later go on to create the British comedy-drama television show 'Auf Wiedersehen, Pet' and competitive TV cooking show 'Masterchef'. Roddam received significant acclaim for his direction of the film, but his first meeting with the Who's guitarist and lead songwriter Pete Townshend did not go exactly as planned. As described on film trivia site IMDb: "when director Franc Roddam first met Pete Townshend, Townshend brought with him tapes of orchestral arrangements of the score that he had produced, assuming that the film would be made in the style of a 'rock opera' in the same way Ken Russell had made Tommy. Roddam explained he wanted to do the complete opposite and make it much more realistic in tone and style, although the score would still, obviously be very prominent and important on the soundtrack. Townshend put the tapes away and never mentioned them again". The site also reveals the origins of the film's distinctive title: "Quadrophenia is an intentional play on the more familiar medical term schizophrenia, to reflect the four distinct personalities of Jimmy Cooper, the film's protagonist. Each personality type said to represent one member of The Who".

Quadrophenia received critical acclaim upon its release and continues to be recognised as one of the greatest films of its time, mixing gritty social realism with youthful idealism and a killer soundtrack to boot. Whether you're a Who fan, a music fan, or just someone who appreciates honest, emotionally charged cinema, it is undoubtedly a film to which it is worth devoting two hours of your time. ●


'SUPERB, STREETWISE, AWESOME STUFF'
★★★★ EMPIRE
QUADROPHENIA
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Blitzed
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BLITZED IN BIRMINGHAM

BLITZED IN BIRMINGHAM is the first in a series of regional live music events around the country, brought to you by the partnership of Blitzed Magazine and AbNormal Productions. It’s a celebration of music derived from and inspired by the legendary Blitz Club in London. We bring you iconic artists from the New Romantic era, alongside emerging local talents inspired by the Blitz spirit.

On Saturday 13th September, at Birmingham’s iconic music venue The Flapper, known for championing incredible live music, we present three exciting acts.

B-MOVIE: An exclusive performance in the West Midlands, you can experience the iconic goth-fuelled electro-rock band performing tracks from their previously ‘lost’ 1982 debut album Hidden Treasures, with the classic singles ‘Nowhere Girl’, ‘Marilyn Dreams’ and ‘Remembrance Day’ and music from their fantastic back catalogue. Finally unearthed from the vaults of Universal Music, see the songs performed how they were meant to be heard.

THE RUDE AWAKENING: Performing the classic 1980s new romantic, new wave and electronic songs synonymous with the Blitz Club era, the music that shaped a decade from artists such as Visage, OMD, Japan, Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, Blancmange, Joy Division and The Cure... together with a handful of original synthpop numbers to get you dancing.

HAHA HATS: Birmingham’s own alternative electro-funksters perform their eclectic ‘warped pop music’ with a sense of mischief. Never a dull moment with HaHa Hats.

For the Blitzed in Birmingham event, doors are at 7pm, but The Flapper is open from 2pm, so feel free to arrive early and take advantage of their fabulous food and drink offerings before the music starts. This is going to be a fantastic live music event.

Book your tickets now to ensure your place at this inaugural regional Blitzed event, experience the ‘lost’ B-Movie album performed live for the first time in the West Midlands, and immerse yourself in the retro-inspired atmosphere of Blitzed in Birmingham. Scan the QR code or visit the ticket website to secure your tickets. ●

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credit Peter Ashworth

KMFDM
HAU RUCK 2025

Metropolis Records

KMFDM
HAU RUCK
2025

The fact that KMFDM is an acronym for Kein Mehrheit Für Die Mitleid, translated into English as "no pity for the majority", should perhaps give you an indication as to the industrial nature of this German band's music. Formed in Hamburg in 1984, and still led by founding member Sascha Konietzko, this release is the remixed and remastered 20th anniversary edition of the band's fourteenth album Hau Ruck (meaning "heave ho" in German), and it still sounds as aggressive and unrelenting as it likely did upon its original release in 2005.

In fact, from the first pounding beats of opening track 'Free Your Hate', Hau Ruck sets a tone of militant defiance and high-octane energy that rarely lets up. The remastered version enhances the album's mechanical precision even further, bringing a fresh clarity to its layers of distorted guitars, hammering percussion, and snarling vocals. Tracks like 'Professional Killer' and 'Real Thing' blend hardcore metal riffs with electronic textures to create music that feels both anarchic and meticulously engineered, something that has long been a hallmark of KMFDM's sound. Lyrically, the album pulls no punches either, delivering anti-authoritarian messages with a biting sarcasm and a confrontational edge that is arguably needed more than ever in this day and age. It is music built for catharsis, for rebellion, and indeed for blasting out of speakers in dark, sweaty rooms. The production updates sharpen rather than soften the impact, making the album feel just as relevant and assertive today as it was two decades ago.

All in all, Hau Ruck is not an album that everyone will enjoy (that much becomes clear as soon as you hit play), and it's certainly not one for a family get-together, but as a prime instance of industrial metal it is focused, confrontational, and one that is bound to hit the spot for fans of both KMFDM and the genre more generally, whether they are longtime listeners or eager newcomers. ●

Imogen Bebb

MAGAZINE THE BAND: THE BIOGRAPHY
HELEN CHASE

McNidder & Grace

1978 ~ 2025
MAGAZINE
MAGAZINE
The biography by Helen Chase

It's clear from some of the fascinating period reviews quoted in Helen Chase's excellent book (now available in an updated version) that Magazine were post-punk back when that literally just meant after punk—not yet a genre in itself.

There's perhaps a sadness that, despite the riches of the post-punk era, few chose the intriguing route Magazine took: a unique mix of raw punk and musical proficiency. This was a band formed out of dissatisfaction with the prevailing culture - musical and beyond - and prone to a restless questioning of just about everything.

Chase brings to life the feel of the times and carefully details the chance encounters and random meetings that wove people into the band's story - both as musicians and beyond. It leaves you marvelling at the incredible and diverse set of individuals who passed through the lineup.

Just imagine: you try out for a new band and the first song revealed is 'Shot by Both Sides'...

Early on, Chase identifies the clash between frontman Howard Devoto's cerebral approach and the band's visceral power. He certainly lacked the thirst for stadiums that drove contemporaries like U2 and Simple Minds, and in retrospect we can only be grateful for that. As Virgin Records found out, for him it was all about creative control.

Magazine instead shared a little of the detached, observational irony that Steely Dan used so well, standing back and observing the madness around them with shock, horror, and mordant humour.

Devoto's deliciously deadpan ennui is summed up in a well-chosen quote: "In myself, I can't say that I was feeling particularly great at that time – but what's new?"

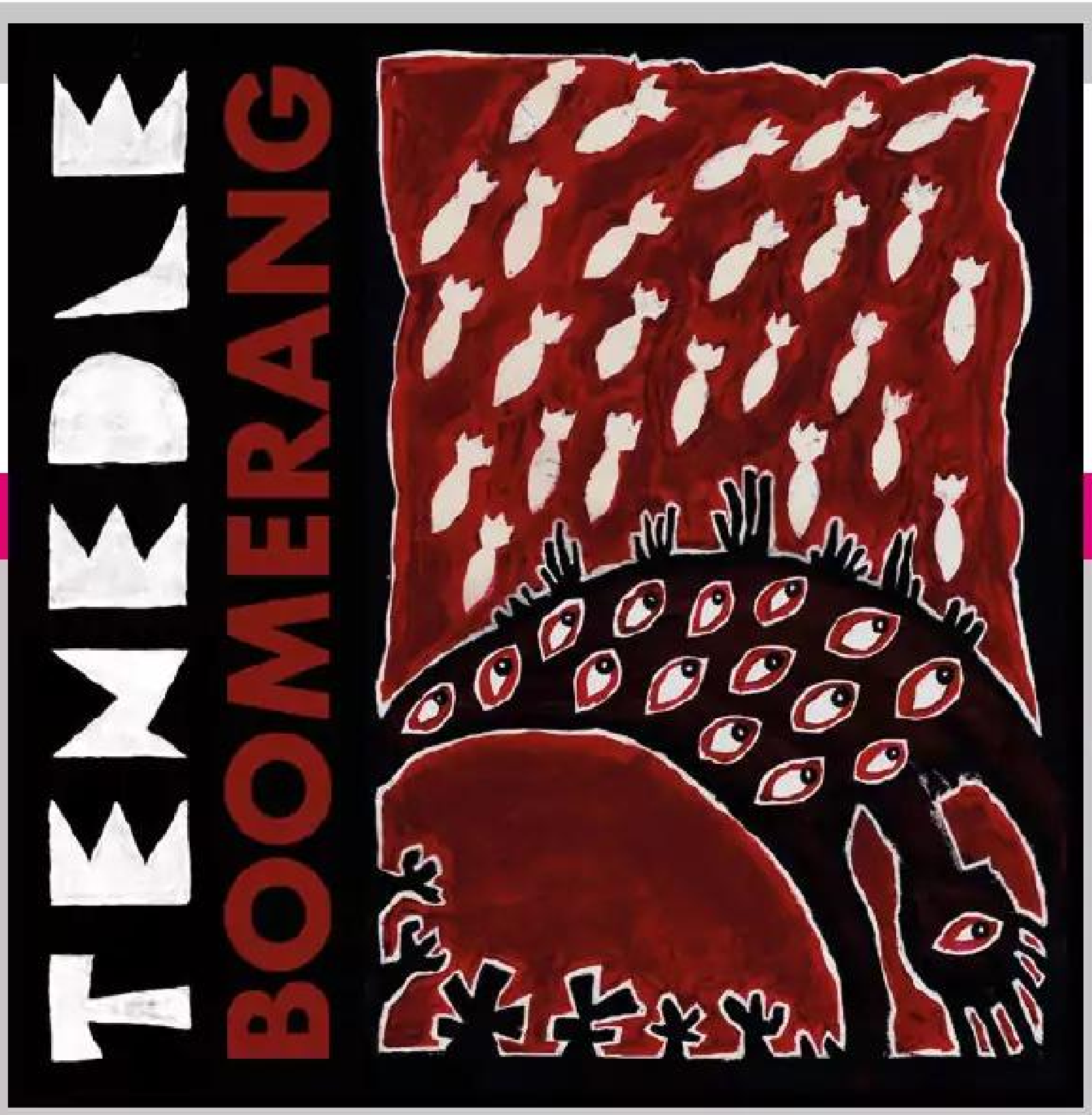
Chase's style is highly readable and, ironically, devoid of pretension. The story moves quickly and smoothly, with plenty of input from all the main players. Some may feel it's a little too brisk, with certain events glossed over, but others will welcome the pace. Ultimately, she succeeds in a transparent telling of the tale that shines the light back onto the music.

The late, great John McGeoch should have the last word: "Magazine were always the connoisseur's choice." ●

Simon Heavisides

TENEDLE

BOOMERANG REMIXES EP AND NOWEAPON.WORLD ART POSTER EXHIBITION



Songwriter and composer Tenedle, born in Italy and now living in The Netherlands, announces the release of the 4-track digital Remix EP of 'Boomerang'. Distinguished by a mix of songwriting, electronic music, and creative imagery and visual art, Tenedle's projects have led the press to call him a visionary-songwriter.

'Boomerang', from his 2010 album Grancassa, is now reissued as a 'concept' remix to be performed as the soundtrack for his new visual project 'No Weapons No War'.

The EP contains: 'Boomerang' (Extended Remastered), 'Boomerang' (No War Remix), 'Luvdaduc' (L'uomo visto dall'altezza di un cane - Library Track Remix) and 'Boomerang' (Base Remix).

So on a grey and rainy Monday afternoon, I decided to pop the EP on, give it a whirl, and share my thoughts...

'Boomerang' - Extended 2025

Instantly intriguing simplistic Depeche Mode-esque synthpop instrumental track. Optimistic and uplifting synthetic decadence. Avant-garde experimental elements laced with atmospheric voice chants, riding the wave of rhythmic undulating sequences, driving the whole track to the end of its journey, with all the passengers inexplicably intoxicated.

'Boomerang' – No War Remix

Hypnotic drum track carries the main sequence pattern, dragging along a heavy, solid synth bass, accentuated by precision-placed ambient effects. The spaced-out, distant rhythm guitar and ethereal vocal chants reassure us of Dimi's human involvement. A hypnotic version of the main track that effortlessly fills eleven minutes of headspace. A delightful late night clubland groover; drink in hand, eyes closed, feeling the moment, living the vibe. A composition of twists and turns, stops and starts and fascinating textures, expertly mixed by a producer that understands how to combine the soul of the listener and the heart of the machine.

'Luvdaduc' – Library Track Remix

Almost an interlude to the main EP. Soft rising synth pads reveal a reassuringly familiar rhythm track with synthetic handclaps and splodgy synth bass, elevated by sanguine chord progressions and an overall feel of optimism and hope, punctuated by brief interludes of discordance, just to make sure you were listening. The shortest track on the EP, which just compels you to play it over again. Nice work. Cute.

'Boomerang' – Base Remix

Looming and disturbing bass washes over you, luring the listener into the syncopated electronica, casual machine-driven rhythm track and dirty, effected other-worldly instrumentation. Clever production again by Dimi, proving that less is more. A somewhat simplified take on the main track, that still manages to combine optimism with a sense of caution and foreboding. Don't trust your ears...

On the occasion of Noweapon.world in Amsterdam, 11-13 July (a human-centric art poster exhibition pushing for a world without weapons on the open-market), Sussurround Multimedia and Tenedle have launched a Limited Edition T-shirt, also named 'No Weapons No War' on sale from June 6th. The remixes will be available on Bandcamp at https://tenedle.bandcamp.com/music and will be free for those who purchase the T-shirt. ●

Kurt Sinclair-Hall

www.tenedle.com and www.noweapon.world

MARK STEWART

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NEW ALBUM – OUT 11 JULY
AVAILABLE ON
LIMITED EDITION RED VINYL / CD / DIGITAL
"AS COMMANDING AS HE EVER WAS AS FRONTMAN OF THE POP GROUP, AND AS SENTIMENTALLY WOUNDED AS A TORCH SINGER." THE WIRE
MUTE.COM MARKSTEWARTMUSIC.COM

credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

MARK REEDER

MASTERMINDED FOR SUCCESS – PART THREE

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Mark Reeder, a disillusioned young man from Manchester, travelled to Berlin in 1978 to buy some records. He never returned! Mark soon became instrumental in developing the electronic music scene in Berlin, introducing Joy Division, The Passage, A Certain Ratio, and many other UK bands. Blitzed Magazine editors Kurt and Bridget flew to Berlin to meet Mark on a beautiful but cold day and chatted over a coffee and an enormous stack of vinyl and CDs, about why he was compelled to stay in this intriguing city. This is part three of a serialised conversation with Mark about his impressive music adventure so far.

We rejoin Mark's story in January 1980, as he tells us about the first gig he put on in West Germany. "I wouldn't say I put it on; I just sort of instigated it. That was Joy Division, and it was the only gig they ever played here. Back then, Manchester was a desperate city. Berlin was a desperate city. Manchester was pretty poverty stricken, and Berlin was poverty stricken. That's why I thought Joy Division would resonate with the Berliners, there's a very similar kind of feeling, although Berlin's a bit more bullet- ridden! If Joy Division were playing there now, they'd fill stadiums, they'd be bigger than Depeche Mode. So West Berliners, I knew they would love Joy Division and be able to connect completely with the dystopian kind of ambience of this band that no-one really cared less about. No-one was interested. Unknown Pleasures changed everything; prior to that, nobody was interested in Joy Division, it was like 'what's that?' Their first single didn't sound like anything! But when they got to Unknown Pleasures it's like, 'oh, this is interesting.' They got a good write up in New Musical Express, so all these anglophiles were interested after that, and I was able to convince Conny Konzack, who ran the Kant Kino in Berlin, to put Joy Division on. I got them in touch with Rob [Gretton] who told me they were going to Cologne, and I said, that's not far from Berlin! Look on the map! I didn't say you've got to go through East Germany, and you can only travel at 20mph and it'll take about 16 hours… and so they arranged it and came to Berlin and played to 58 people. I was disappointed, I wanted it to be packed out. The Kant Kino was an old cinema, a seated venue, but Joy Division had only just recently started to have a few more people than fifty and they were quite used to playing to that amount of people so to them, it was a great gig. I was able to take them to East Berlin. Ian wanted to see the Brandenburg Gates from the other side of the wall from West Berlin, so I took them to East Berlin

Bernard Sumner & Mark Reeder

in a blizzard, the worst weather you can imagine. Bernard Sumner kept whining all day about the fact that his balls were freezing off! 'I've not got any underpants on; my balls are freezing off!' He should have worn a longer coat!"

We wanted to know more about how Joy Division had become part of Mark's Berlin journey. "I came to Berlin, and I became like Joy Division's PR. Rob Gretton said "can I send you some records? Maybe we can get a gig. Send them to the newspapers, the magazines, and the radio stations, then we'll get some airplay or get a review. Maybe someone would be interested enough to get them a gig." Of course, nobody was interested at all! My job was a PR for a band that nobody was interested in, but at least Rob said he'd pay my rent and phone bill, and I got a small wage which I didn't really need, I didn't need much here. I did that until Tony Wilson started Factory Records, and then I automatically became Factory's PR, and it got better as it went along, but by 1983 I decided that I didn't want to do it anymore. It was when 'Blue Monday' was being released, I thought, I cannot do this anymore, this record is going to be MASSIVE. There was no Factory Germany or Factory America, it was only going to be released in England. I wanted to do Factory Deutschland, but Tony Wilson wouldn't put money into it. I managed to talk to Rough Trade, who had a distribution arm here, for them to do it so we could release 'Blue Monday' in Germany, and it went exactly as I expected it to do – 'out of this world' massive!

It was a huge hit, it bridged some gap between the disco music of the 70s - in independent circles, disco was a bit of a dirty word - and what I was experiencing in the club scene here. I went to the Metropol, the biggest gay club in Europe at the time. They were playing a different kind of disco music, really dark, New York avantgarde kind of disco music, François Kevorkian kind of stuff, and I wanted to find out more about that. It was the precursor to what eventually became techno you know. It was like the beginnings of high energy. Bernard [Sumner] came over to Berlin and I took him there and said, "this what we have here". It reminded him a little bit of New York, because he'd been to Paradise Garage, and it's like Paradise Garage but the music was different. The music that they played in Paradise Garage wasn't Italo high energy, kind of like Italo disco music, and wasn't as electronic as what we were hearing here, and it was like, you know, how do we make this kind of music? And the first attempt was 'Everything's Gone Green' and 'Temptation.' They were just kind of the first steps into trying to replicate what we'd heard in the Metropol, and then that became 'Blue Monday'."

It's not very often that you get a record that's as cool as 'Blue Monday' that suddenly gets massive, is it? It sounds like an underground record. "It was an underground record, but it was an underground record that everybody liked. It was not a commercially created 'product,' it was something that had been genuinely made out of a desire to have my record that I made, that I can take down to the Metropol to get it played there. Metropol... that was the only driving force. So how do we make a record like that? As a first attempt there was 'Temptation' and 'Everything's Gone Green.' When they were making Power Corruption and Lies, I made Bernard cassettes. I would take all this music I was listening to and make him a mix tape of things that were inspiring that I thought would drive the ideas. On that tape were songs that were just game changers for the whole idea for 'Blue Monday.' Things like Ennio Morricone and Donna Summer, and so they were listening to that tape, and it was just like wow, it works."

We wondered what Mark's family thought about him being so far from home in those early years. "At the beginning, my parents were very fearful that I was living in Germany, that I'd even come to Germany for that matter. They always wanted to know "when are you coming back?" and I said to my Mum "come and visit me here, and you'll see why I'm living here." I said, " if you don't come, I'm not coming back." It took five years for them to drum up enough courage to take that step come to Germany. It was a big thing to come to Germany because of past prejudices, but also the fact that their neighbours had already decreed me a traitor. But my parents came here, and they were like, "now we know why you live here." They went to East Berlin. Like me, they went every day. They fell in love with East Berlin, because it reminded them of the 1950s and they came every year after that, and they understood why I wanted to stay here." ●

Mark Reeder – Masterminded for Success Part Four will be in the next issue of Blitzed Magazine.

credit Jan Blackwell

By Jan Blackwell

HOLLY JOHNSON
SHEFFIELD CITY HALL

Music legend, and former Frankie Goes to Hollywood frontman, Holly Johnson is on tour celebrating the Welcome to The Pleasuredome 40th Anniversary. The evening started with an acoustic guitar set from Manchester singer Lee Forsyth Griffiths. It must be challenging for a support to play to a half-filled theatre, especially when singing his own songs the audience may not be aware of, but he was confident and accomplished, adding fun anecdotes between songs. The theatre started to fill with eager Holly fans waiting for the start of the show they had all come to see. The lights dimmed and the large video screen came to life as the band entered the stage. Holly came out to huge cheers and applause as the first song kicked in, 'The World Is My Oyster', then going straight into 'Welcome to the Pleasuredome', and wow, what a great start. Holly, wearing a black leather ensemble with a huge codpiece, was suitably flamboyant and controversial, although after a few songs he said "these trousers are killing me". Throughout the performance, the large LED wall displayed videos and imagery that matched perfectly the corresponding song, all adding to the performance experience. It was interesting to hear Holly and the band cover Springsteen's 'Born to Run' and The Temptations' 'WAR' merged perfectly into 'Two Tribes'. Highlights of the evening, a few for me; 'Americano', which was simply stunning, as was 'Love Train' and 'Relax'. After 'Relax', the band said goodnight and left the stage, and the screams for more were deafening. But it wasn't long before the band returned for the encore, much to the delight of the crowd. Holly wore a sleek, long black coat that glistened and a black leather crown, he said "this is my favourite song, not just a Christmas, join in if you know the words" and of course the audience obliged, 'The Power of Love' was just sublime. The evening ended and the entire band took a bow in front of their fans as they bid a final farewell, Holly blowing kisses and wished everyone a safe journey home. A fabulous evening of wonderful memories. Holly sounds just the same as he always did, and his band compliments him perfectly! ●

credit Jan Blackwell

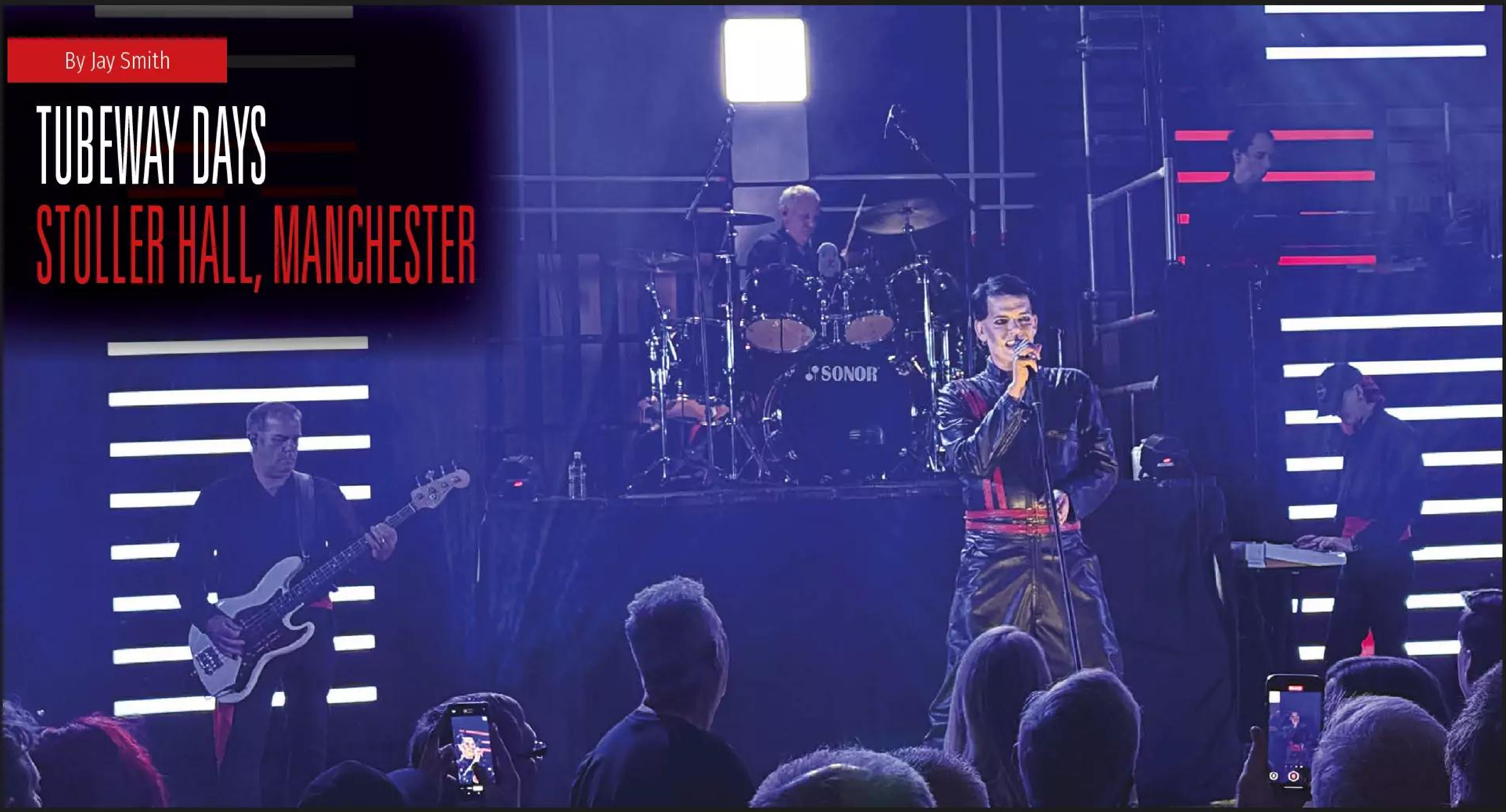
We've got you COVERED

Blitzed features the best tribute and cover bands recreating the sounds of your favourite artists

By Jay Smith

TUBEWAY DAYS

STOLLER HALL, MANCHESTER



Credit Genevieve

Let's get one thing straight: I'm a massive fan of Gary Numan. Since the age of 12 (a depressingly long time ago), I've seen him live a ludicrous number of times and he's been a huge influence on my life, not least in terms of my own modest music career. With this in mind, I made my way to the prestigious confines of Manchester's Stoller Hall with unrealistic expectations and yet somehow, over the course of the next two hours, those expectations were exceeded in almost every way. As we entered the hall, opening act UltraFoxx were delivering an impressive rendition of John Foxx's classic hit Underpass, its instantly recognisable synth hook filling the venue with a cathedral-esque atmosphere. Set to a motorik pulse, the vocalist delivered in suitably detached style. More impressively, the band ended with a haunting 'Hymn', capturing the essence of Midge Ure-era Ultravox pomp perfectly. Catch UltraFoxx live if you're a fan.

The first thing that struck me as I took my seat was the monolithic set which towered above the auditorium, lovingly recreating the iconic Touring Principle show with which Numan wowed audiences in 1979. A packed house from front to back, the audience consisted mainly of Numan die-hards looking to relive their youth with younger fans more recently converted to the cause. Palpable anticipation could be felt in the air. The lights dimmed and the crowd leapt to their feet as the opening melody of This Wreckage rang out, chills simultaneously running down the spine of every person in the room. As the band kicked into life, the level of sonic clarity and authenticity was nothing short of remarkable, matched only by the spellbinding visuals. Crisp, booming drums locked tight with recreations of Paul Gardiner's unique, wandering basslines. As for the synthesisers, the sounds emanating from the beautifully mixed PA were indistinguishable from those synonymous with the name Numan.   Amid much dry ice, frontman Christopher Fielding appeared clad in the 'Telekon' jumpsuit, sporting just the right amount of practiced attitude. It's no mean feat to replicate (see what I did there?) Gary Numan's idiosyncratic stage presence or unique vocals and yet Fielding handled them with consummate ease. Absolutely astonishing and the audience were in immediate rapture, jaws dropped. Working their way through the famous 'Teletour' setlist, we bore witness to note-for-note performances with particular highlights being 'Remind Me To Smile', a raucous 'Me I Disconnect From You', and a throbbing 'Everyday I Die' (complete with truly breathtaking synth solo). A costume change saw Fielding return for outstanding versions of 'Are 'Friends' Electric?' and 'I Die You Die', 'I Dream of Wires', and a visceral 'We Are Glass'. The latter saw none other than Rrussell Bell (Numan's own guitarist for many years) join the party with his distinctive six-string style. Closing with 'Love Needs No Disguise', Fielding returned to the stage in gangster suit and trilby, a fitting end to a magnificent show. He rarely breaks character but when overwhelmed by the sheer level of audience response, he reciprocates with a super-cute double 'thumbs up' on each occasion. He's clearly a nice guy and a generous performer. With outstanding musicianship from the whole band and a genuinely impressive stage show, the level of painstaking detail that has gone into Tubeway Days is far beyond that of a mere tribute... It's a perfect facsimile of Gary Numan's halcyon days in every way. Go see them. ●

credit Stuart Mountain

By Mik Scarlet

VICIOUS PINK

229 THE VENUE

Oh so long ago, Mik aged in his early 20s fell in love with a band that sounded like they came from the future, a sexy fun future. Before he ever had the chance to see them live, they had split up. Boo. Time passed, life happened and kids were born, grew and flew the nest. Suddenly, during an interview with futurist icon Rusty Egan the same Mik was introduced to one Josie Warden. Yes, THE Josie Warden, singer of the band Mik loved so long ago. Josie Warden of Vicious Pink, the band from the 80s that should have been huge, if only they weren't so far ahead of their time and record companies had imagination. Wowzers. Over the next few months I'm lucky enough to now count Josie among my friends, so I heard of the possibility of new records and even live shows. Double wowzers.

Then the big night arrived, Vicious Pink playing live at the Electronic Café Live event, and at 229 The Venue, a fully wheelchair accessible gig venue. It was meant to be. I cannot explain the excitement as the night drew nearer, at last the chance to see a band so important to me. Treble wowzers.

Jumping out of the taxi and then arriving in the packed room, Magnetic Skies were already playing, and are a really tight live band. They create music that sounds like it was teleported from the 80s, but in a way that combines so many influences from the time that they sound entirely new. Moody, sensitive and stylish, I felt the pull of Magnetic Skies (sorry, couldn't resist).

Then the time drew near, so I fought like a banned dog breed to get to the front. Succeeding, after only a small argument with a venue staff member who wanted to let other VIPs stand in front of me (not this gig mate, not this cripple), I was ready. Brian stepped up and opened the set with an instrumental, *.15 To Nowhere. I didn't know how the room was feeling, but I was excited. When I saw Josie nervously waiting to go just behind me (it really had a club gig feel) I knew this was going to fulfil my youthful fantasies. Oh wow, and then some.

Josie is an outstanding front person and you could immediately feel that both Brian and Josie were going to enjoy this night. Kicking off with 'So You Want To Love Me', Vicious Pink began to take the room by storm. 'South Side', 'In The Swim' and 'Spooky' followed before the hits that should have been huge began. 'Take Me Now', just wow, 'Cccan't You See', double wow and this should have been a number 1 all over the world, 'Not Your Kind Of Girl' and then, he says blushing, 'Fetish', which was dedicated to little old me. I have always thought this is the track that made every goth and fetish type go crazy but put the record company in a panic. My favourite track from that era and a go to for filling a dancefloor, 'Fetish' was even better live. 'Great Balls Of Fire' came last and Josie left the stage to Brian playing 'Undercover'. Just one of the best gigs in a very long time. ●

GIG REVIEW ●

By Marc Massive

LENE LOVICH

THE PRINCE ALBERT, BRIGHTON

credit Marc Massive

Often grouped into the ‘Kooky’ category with her contemporaries O’Connor, Hagen and Toyah, Lene’s unique trademark vocalisations on ‘Lucky Number’ gave her a worldwide hit in 1979. Iconic, often brandished, but in Lene’s case, appropriately so, as a sold-out gig confirms. Promoters Stigmata curated a ‘ménage à trois’ of powerful female-fronted bands, with Le Lamb, and Das Fluff, completing the bill.

Lene Lovich, the high priestess of birdsong, head wrapped mysteriously in material, but every inch the Special Star of the first song taken from the seminal No Man’s Land album. With the swathes of material unwound, the figure of a 76-year-old goddess stands before us, age immaterial to the prowess this artist commands, her hardcore followers alongside a group of pogoing twenty-somethings, testament to Lene’s ongoing appeal. The sound is refreshingly clear as Lene effortlessly glides through her yesteryear classics, eyes in full Norma Desmond mode as she looks out, enjoying her captivated audience.

“Imagination is essential to creative art”, an ode to interfering record labels, in the triumphant marching Joan, which sees Lene’s saxophonist skills thrill the crowd. The plastic big guns of ‘New Toy’, a dig at consumerism, written by a name-checked Thomas Dolby, sounding as fresh as its 1981 debut, influencing this current Toy Box Tour and recent Cherry Red release of her Stiff Records years.

‘Monkey Talk’ brings with it the full range of Lene’s unique animalistic vocal abilities, culminating in the night’s highlight, ‘Supernature’, the 70s disco hit she penned for Cerrone. Experiencing this classic in its original form evokes goosebumps. Serving as a heartfelt plea for mankind to cease its abuse of this planet we share with Mother Nature, a plea that sadly remains unheard some 50 years later. With her affinity for animals, veganism, and songs like ‘Don’t Kill The Animals’, lest we forget how ahead of the curve she was. ‘Lucky Number’ propels us toward the finish line, as the audience erupts to the first “Ah! Oh! Ah! Oh!”, this new wave classic losing none of its appeal. The pogoing kids go wild, and the room overflows with a tangible love for Lovich. For an artist who has been in the game this long - original to a fault and still kicking arse by putting on a tour like this, attracting both young and old - that special star continues to burn brightly. ●

credit Paul Browne

By Paul Browne

EXIT NORTH
UNION CHAPEL, LONDON

The hallowed surroundings of London's Union Chapel provide a perfect backdrop for Exit North's first London live performance. Exit North seems to be the logical next step from when Thomas Feiner originally began collaborating with Steve Jansen (someone who has an impressive musical legacy dating back to beloved art synth outfit Japan). Brooding vocals, subtle electronics and Jansen's muscular drumming talents combine to present music that invites reflection yet also has a sense of weight; an emotional shift that's perhaps difficult to attach a label to.

Tonight's performance is kicked off with support act Sweet Billy Pilgrim, who deliver a folksy set of songs that they describe as "trash pastel". In delivery, they offer a smart take on a lo-fi set sprinkled with some more energetic moments. The band's Tim Elsenburg is also on double guitar duties tonight bolstering Exit North's own live show.

Exit North's performance sees them showcasing their latest Harm/Terms EP as well as mining their excellent 2023 album Anyway, Still. Steve Jansen's impressive drum work along with Thomas Feiner's measured vocals are combined with a kind of theatrical performance by the singer which results in a quiet, controlled choreography.

Exit North's majestic 'Terms' (taken from their new EP) is a sprawling epic with Feiner musing on "dreams and lies". Then there's the softer 'Where The Coin Fell' which bristles with an icy fragility; plucked synth moods - care of Steve Jansen also providing keyboards - darting about on a hymnal composition. The more boisterous 'Bled Out' (described by Feiner as a song that's "somewhat personal to me") comes across as a powerful, cathartic blowout. There's also the ethereal soundscape of 'The Unforeseen', a mesmerising moment that's boosted care of Jansen's earthy, organic percussion.

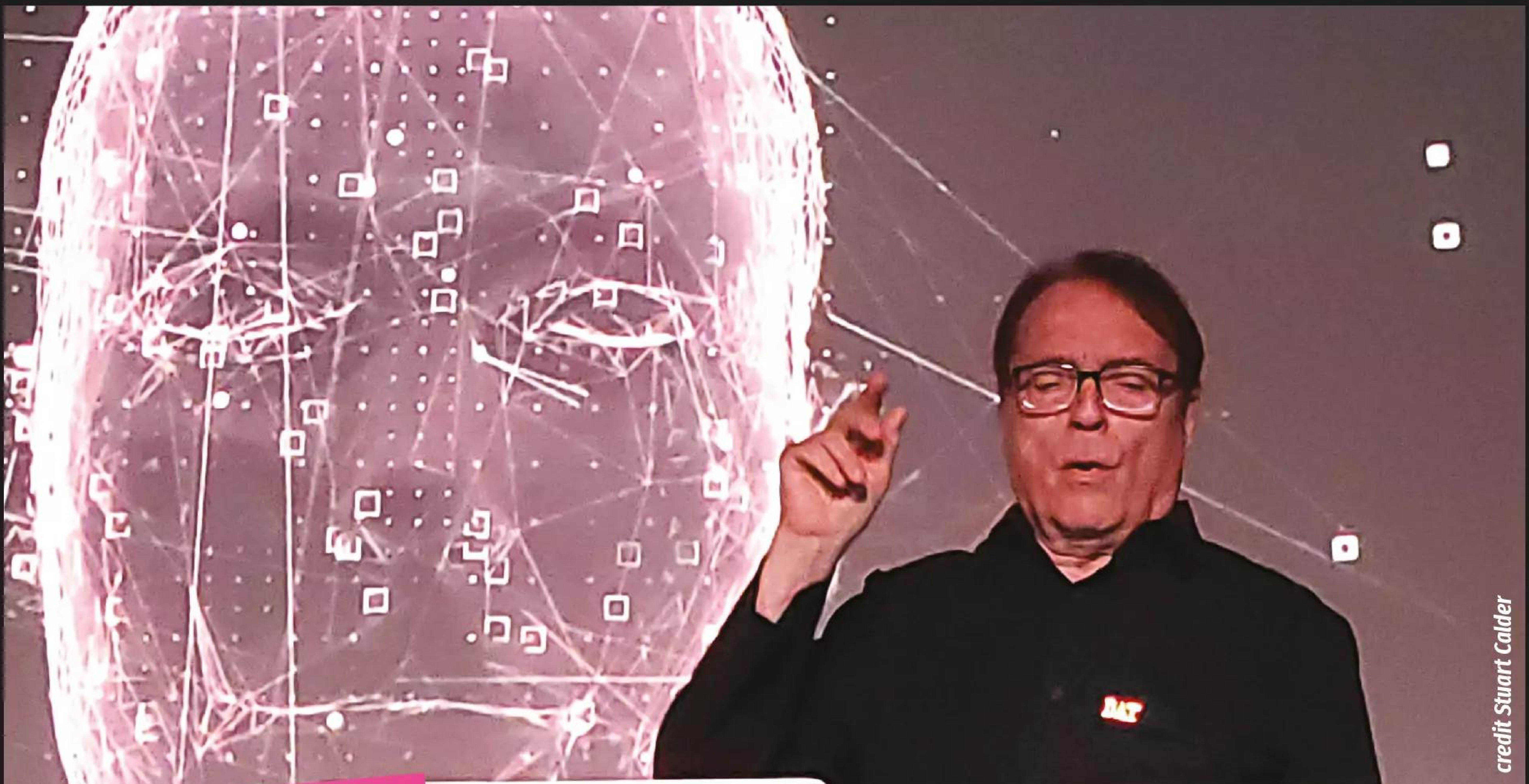
There's something of a Scott Walker quality present via Feiner's vocal work, which includes the baroque reverie of 'Lessons In Doubt', a song which he suggests is "wondering whether the choices you made were right. The melancholic 'Your Story Mine' is peppered with sparse, mournful synth notes.

The percussive 'Harm' is another new song, a sweeping, mythic outing balanced with quieter, more studied vocal reflections.

There's a nod to Bowie on the smooth rhythms of the set's closing song 'In The Game'. A huge, passionate roar compels the band to return. With the contemplative moods of 'The Signal' to finish up, it's a good example of that essential chemistry between Feiner and Jansen. ●

STUART CALDER Reviews

Stuart Calder hosts The Electro Wave Show which is broadcast every Friday night at 8pm on Spectrum On Air and Saturday evening at 8pm on Wythenshawe FM. The show has an eclectic mix of both new and classic electronic music, from all over the world, with a bias towards the independent and unsigned artists plus exclusive and unheard tracks. Previous shows can be heard at www.mixcloud.com/electrowaveshow and can be found on all social media by searching for 'Electro Wave Show'.


credit Stuart Calder

By Stuart Calder

WOLFGANG FLÜR AND PETER DUGGAL
BAND ON THE WALL, MANCHESTER

There's something rebellious about heading to a gig on a Sunday, but when the lineup features two of electronic music's most compelling figures, resistance is futile. Opening the evening was Birmingham's Peter Duggal, and his set did not disappoint. Peter has been working with electronic pioneer Wolfgang Flür for several years now and it's easy to see why, as their styles dovetail together perfectly. His set was a masterclass in layered, intelligent electronica, with Duggal using a vocoder, not necessarily to enhance vocals, but to add another instrument to his armoury. His upbeat set never fails, and quite frankly, a full 2 hour set from Pete would not go amiss. As the iconic venue filled up, it was great to see a truly mixed crowd, from the seasoned synth heads to the students, newly acquired fans. Wolfgang's set opened with 'Say No!' from his Magazine album, with Wolfgang, dressed in black, waiting in the wings to start his set. His new album, Times, was well represented, along with favourites from his previous albums. Wolfgang has a knack of being able to weave track after track together in a way that keeps the audience engaged. The music ebbs and flows and Flür is never stationary behind his laptops and midi controllers.

This is techno-pop at its finest, with the visuals complimenting the music, within no time, the cross-generation audience were dancing like it was Saturday night. The visuals need a special mention as they take you back into the 70s and 80s with Kraftwerk imagery and we journey on through, with pictures of performances in major cities around the world, with Blackpool's Golden Mile given a special cheer, along with the mock-up of Kraftwerk as Teletubbies! Wolfgang's music is neither produced nor designed to be listened to on tinny speakers. Given the chance to express themselves on the Band On The Wall's impressive audio system, 'Beat Perfecto', 'Posh', 'Best Buy' etc are all taken to a new level. Both Wolfgang and Peter are touring throughout the year (including a show at Berlin's Hansa studios in November) and with competitively priced tickets, it's an event that really shouldn't be missed. ●

https://www.instagram.com/wolfgang_fluer/

BLITZED GIVEAWAYS

In partnership with our friendly promoters, labels and the artists themselves, we are delighted to bring you the opportunity to get your hands on fantastic signed merchandise, books, albums, rarities and more.

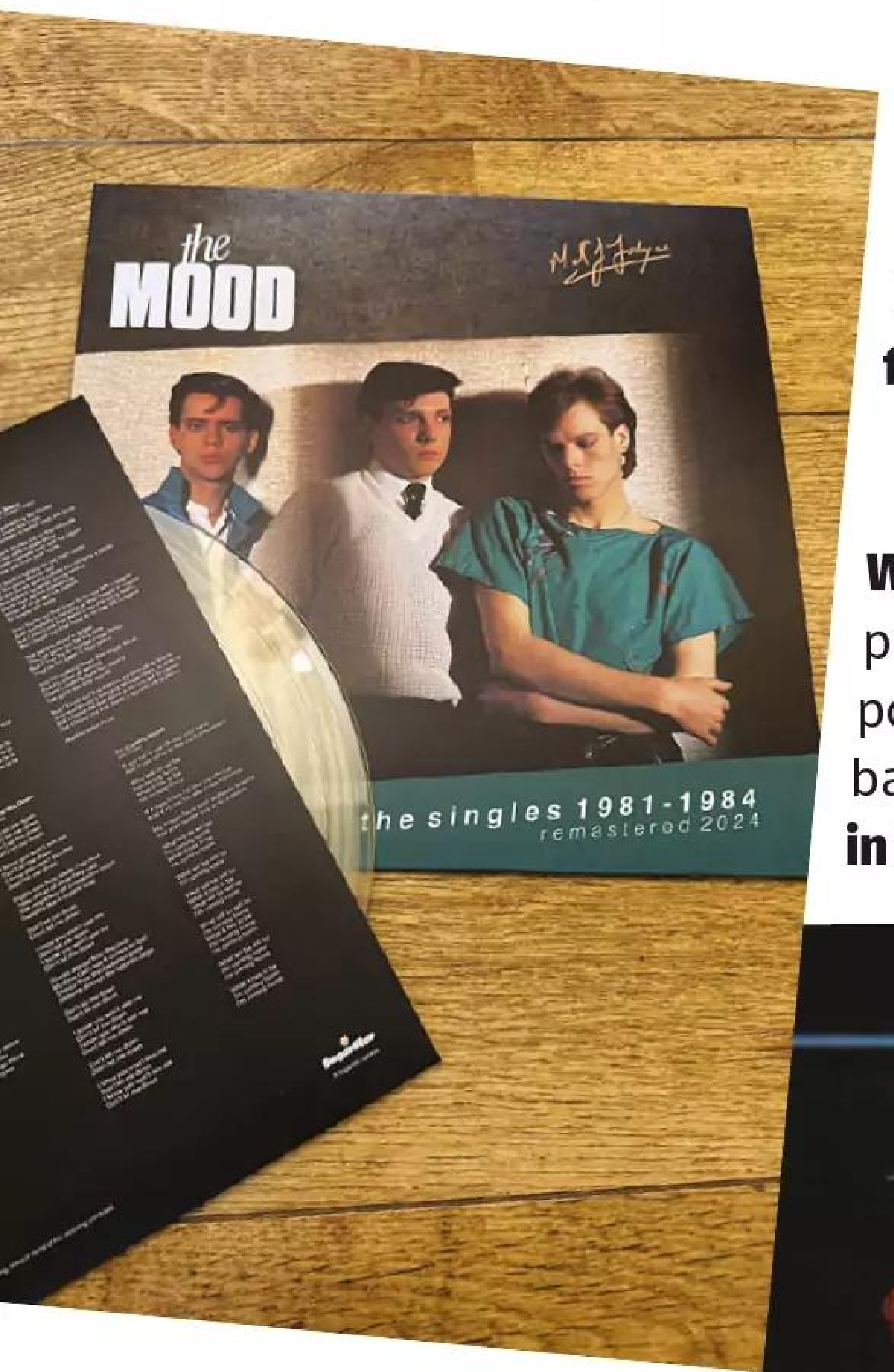
First up, we are giving away the new **Twin Noir** album Chapter 2. This fantastic new wave German electronic-rock album has been signed by Cody and Ian and would be a wonderful addition to your vinyl record collection. **You can get a signed copy of this fabulous album by emailing comps@blitzedmag.com, putting TWIN NOIR in the subject line, and telling us why you would like to own it.**

B-Movie
HIDDEN TREASURES
AMPEX

Next, to commemorate the dramatic release of **B-Movie**'s 'lost' debut album, some four decades later(!), we have signed copies of the Hidden Treasures album to give away. **You could own one of these rarities by emailing comps@blitzedmag.com, putting B-MOVIE in the subject line and telling us what is your favourite B-Movie song of all time and why.**

ANDY BELL
TEN CROWNS

Keeping the adrenaline going here, we are celebrating the recent release of the incredible new **Andy Bell** album Ten Crowns. Andy has personally signed an official postcard to accompany our giveaway copies of this fabulous limited edition (only 1500 pressed) oxblood vinyl record. Be the envy of your friends. **Email comps@blitzedmag.com, putting ANDY BELL in the subject line and tell us your favourite memory related to Andy Bell.**



This newly released album from **The Mood**, The Singles 1981-84, contains the singles, B-sides, and rarities that collectively provide a colourful snapshot of an evolving 1980s synthpop band yearning to break through. We have signed copies of this iconic record to give away. **Email comps@blitzedmag.com, putting THE MOOD in the subject line and tell us how far away is Paris from York. (Clue: if you know The Mood it's further than most might think).**

Our final giveaway is EXCLUSIVE and utterly BONKERS. To celebrate the release of the new **Men Without Hats** single 'I Love the 80's', we are giving away signed props used by the band in the actual promotional video! From the pop video's cinema scenes, Ivan and the guys have given us the actual popcorn cartons, drinks cartons and 3D glasses signed by all of the band! **Email comps@blitzedmag.com, putting MEN WITHOUT HATS in the subject line and tell us your favourite thing from the 1980s.**

POP CORN
POP CORN
IVAN

GOOD LUCK!

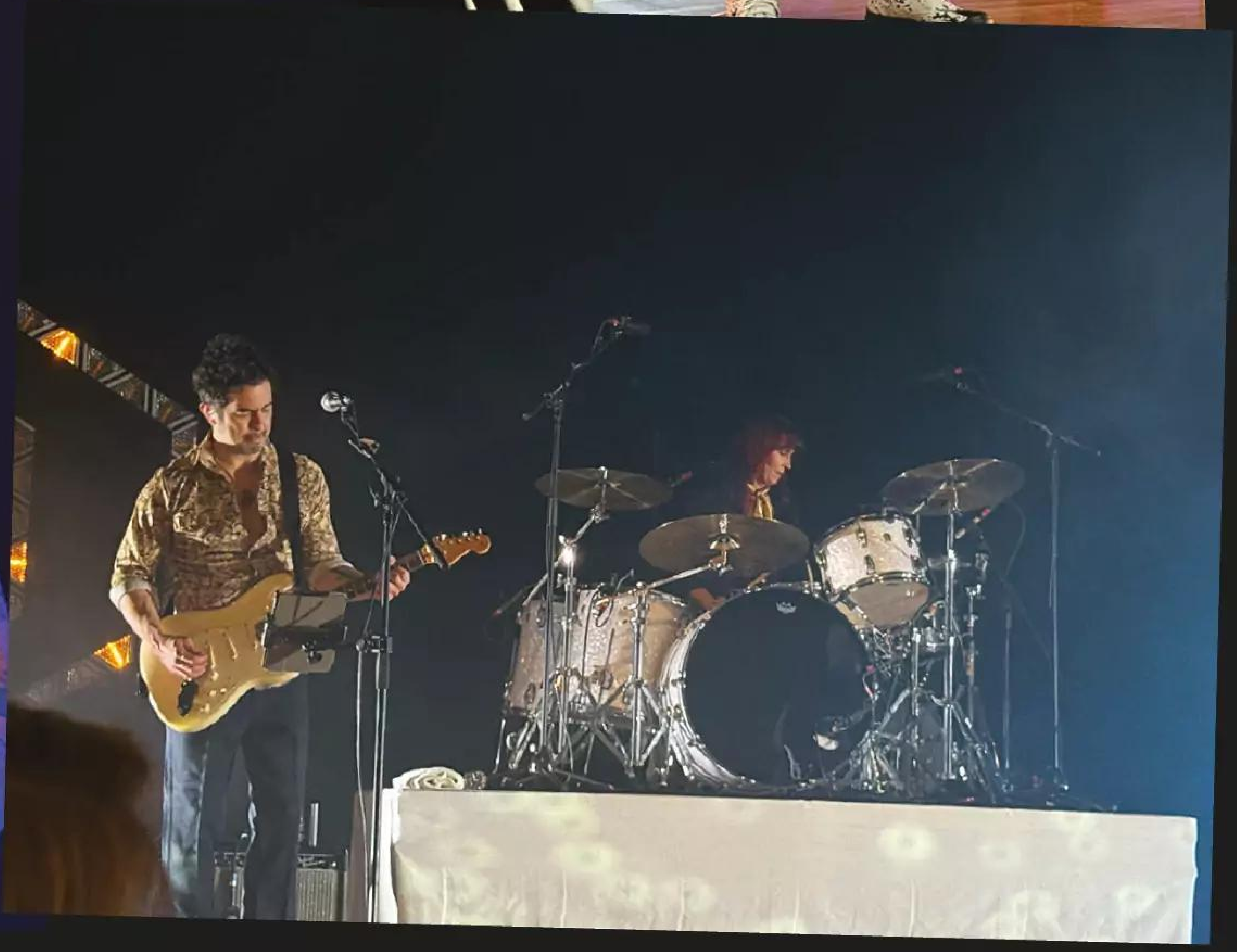
GIG REVIEW ●

By Bridget Gray

ANDY BELL

SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall



In May, Erasure frontman Andy Bell toured the UK in support of his new solo album Ten Crowns, and Blitzed attended the second date of the tour at the Birmingham Symphony Hall on 2nd May.

Co-writer, producer and album collaborator of Ten Crowns, Dave Audé, opened the night with a DJ set of classic 'bangers' including 'Kiss Me' by TinTin much to the delight of the Birmingham crowd. Audé returned to the stage with Bell for the main show, accompanied by Nashville act Steele Fountain (comprised of Hailey Steele and Jerry Fuentes), and also renowned drummer Sarah Tomek.

They exploded into the opening track of Ten Crowns, 'Breaking Thru the Interstellar' although 'breaking through the sound barrier' may have been a bit more apt! It was LOUD. Then followed a string of Erasure classics such as 'Blue Savannah', 'Sometimes', 'Drama!', 'Chains of Love' and 'Love To Hate You' intermingled with songs from Ten Crowns including a duet with Hailey Steele on 'Heart's A Liar' and a beautiful stripped back version of Erasure's 'Breathe' sung by Hailey and Jerry while Andy left the stage for a small break. 8 out of the Ten Crowns were performed, with only 'Dawn of Heaven's Gate' and 'Lies So Deep' not making an appearance. We were also treated to an unexpected cover of Olivia Newton-John's 'Xanadu'.

The new album material was fantastically well received, especially considering it was only the second night of the tour and also album release day. My personal favourite, 'Put Your Empathy On Ice', was absolutely out of this world. In fact, Andy has never sounded better. He looked confident and happy and sparkly, and was note and word perfect. Yes, I miss Vince, and it is odd to see Andy on stage with a full band, but they were phenomenal, and Andy and Dave's chart hitting album performed live is a joy to behold. Special mention goes to Sarah Tomek on drums who was incredible, the fills in 'Godspell' for example were stand out.

Ending the night with album closer 'Thank You', a reflective, wistful ballad (cue mascara leaking) before the inevitable 'A Little Respect' lifted the roof, Andy Bell proved that he is pop royalty and well deserving of his Ten Crowns. ●

By Marc Massive

PiL - PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED
CHALK, BRIGHTON

credit Ben Wilson

As we congregated at the spit-soaked altar of Punk's spirit, mainly from Mr Lydon tonight, his lyric book front and centre readied to deliver his pearls of wisdom to a sold-out Brighton gig. The first of four sold-out shows, and my first experience of the man who changed the face of music, you could feel the respect from his hardcore.

The band was tight and experienced, with new drummer Mark Roberts looking increasingly ecstatic throughout the set. John was on fine form, effing and blinding, dismayed that Brighton couldn't muster "F**k Off" back to him until coaxed, and giving security a mouthful when an old boy in the front fainted. From the opener 'Home', the first of several cuts from their successful 1986 album. The crowd gets warmed up to the Afrika Bambaataa/ Lydon 'World Destruction', with John showing his rap abilities, much to the pleasure of some of the younger folks. 'This Is Not a Love Song', another track, losing none of its power. Many of the live versions tonight seem to be dub-like in their presentation, catching a dance groove that John can lose himself in lyrically, 'Poptones' from the post-punk Metal Box proving that a 7.46-minute, avant-garde track can and should be played in its entirety, and these mostly work. Lu Edmonds and Scott Firth show off their multi-instrumentalist skills throughout, often picking up something new to play at opposite ends of the stage, leading to John's "We are not the karaoke Sex Pistols" bitch-slap.

A 3-minute break ensues, time enough for John to smoke a Marlboro. 'Public Image' from the debut 1978 album of the same name gets a mandatory airing, as does a later track from their arsenal, 'Open Up', Lydon's flirtation with early 90s rave culture and a chart hit with Leftfield. Followed up with another hit, 'Rise', and its rousing, sing-along 'Anger Is An Energy', which the audience dutifully join in with for a momentary increase in testosterone.

Leaving the merch stand empty-handed as the controversial new logo on red tee wasn't quite the classic symbol on black I'd hoped for, with John making a profanity-laced public address to clarify the dissent in the ranks, that it wasn't a replacement logo. You can't keep a classic down, which pretty much sums up my first experience of PiL. ●

GIG REVIEW ●

By Martin James

THE WOLFGANG PRESS

THE STEEL YARD, LONDON

credit Martin James

Midweek London on a warm spring evening. Little do the after-work drinkers, the drive-by commuters and the selfie-stick tourists realise that in a side street club more used to drum n bass raves, the legendary Wolfgang Press are returning to deliver another tall story a full 30 years since their last London gig at Camden's Jazz Café.

The Wolfgang Press enter the stage with a shuffle, a scratch of the head and pre-match gremlins as Andrew Gray battles to get his tabletop rack of guitar effects working. His brother Stephen and singer Mick Allen watch on bemused until, with a flourish of synth and a crunch of guitar Mick makes the two-word statement "technical difficulties" and the opening beats of 'The Line' mark the moment of their return.

It's an achingly restrained opener that seems to the breath menace of their earliest gigs but with the anger of youth replaced with world-weary resignation. As Mick sings 'we are dust and we are time', Stephen throws ghostly shapes and Andrew paints a spectral canvas, we're left with no doubt that this latest incarnation of the band is the work of people who have been there, seen too much and lived to tell a tale all too deeply understood.

From here they deliver a set drawn largely from their latest album A 2nd Shape with the subverted pop tones of 'Sad Surfer', the ebbing synths and pleading vocals of 'This Garden of Eden' and the darkly close to collapse groove of 'Take it Backwards' rumbling like a slow moving but unstoppable juggernaut. Mick's trademark bent over stance and eye's shut anguish belying the years.

After a false start the delicate album standout 'Glacier' melts into brilliantly pulsing new track 'Man Made Heaven' which thunders to Mick's cries of 'it's a lie'. After which the closing a shard of glass rendition of 'Kansas' seems a little incongruous and dare I say, superfluous. That was then but this is now...

"I'm getting too old for this" Mick mutters during the set as he swigs from an ever-present water bottle. As returns go it's a subdued affair. The gremlins are many, and sound quality isn't the best. But there's something hopeful in the air. This could be the start of another, equally powerful Wolfgang Press story. ●

By Darren D. Danahy

BLANCMANGE AND MIDGE URE
THE ORIENTAL THEATRE - DENVER, COLORADO

Photo credits Kelley Donovan

I had access to MTV during its early days, when it felt like one was witnessing the future of music. The imagery and sound seemed so otherworldly and inspiring. Videos like 'Vienna' and 'Living on the Ceiling' stood out as being musically and visually innovative, and I would never have believed then that I'd see the creators of those songs perform them on a stage I also have performed on. But on May 19, that very thing happened at The Oriental Theatre in Denver, Colorado. The Oriental is one of the oldest venues in Denver, built in 1927. It's one of those classic venues you rarely see any more in lieu of uninspired utilitarian locales. It's also in the kind of neighbourhood where people go to get away from more congested urban areas.

Blancmange took the stage punctually, assertively, and energetically. Still a two-piece, Neil Arthur's commanding baritone deftly supported by Tara Busch on synthesizers for this tour. The set focused on the tracks from their compilation Everything Is Connected that released last year, showcasing their best material over the past 45 years. Neil joked and danced frequently, inspiring the crowd to dance and laugh. (He said the only way he's joining the mile high club is by performing here). Midge Ure headlined with another two-piece band, but with a different vibe. Where Blancmange's set went straight to my dancing feet, Midge's hit hardest in the heart.

Backed by keyboardist Charlie Round-Turner, whilst alternating between synth and Stratocaster, Midge focused on his amazing voice. Opening with 'Dear God' they drew heavily from the Ultravox albums Vienna, Quartet, and Lament. Midge was warm between songs, telling stories to the rapt crowd, including how his most streamed song is a Bowie cover just before performing it. The highlights were the tender moments. 'Vienna' and 'Lament' had the audience enraptured. Turning to look at the audience, I felt a powerful silence in the crowd and tears welling up. The event felt to me as though I was coming full circle with my musical inspiration. Where four decades ago I felt inspired by this music to save for a synthesizer, today I feel inspired to dust mine off and get on a stage again. If these two artists have a home anywhere in your music collection, I would advise catching this tour. They have rejuvenated music I've known for much of my life. ●

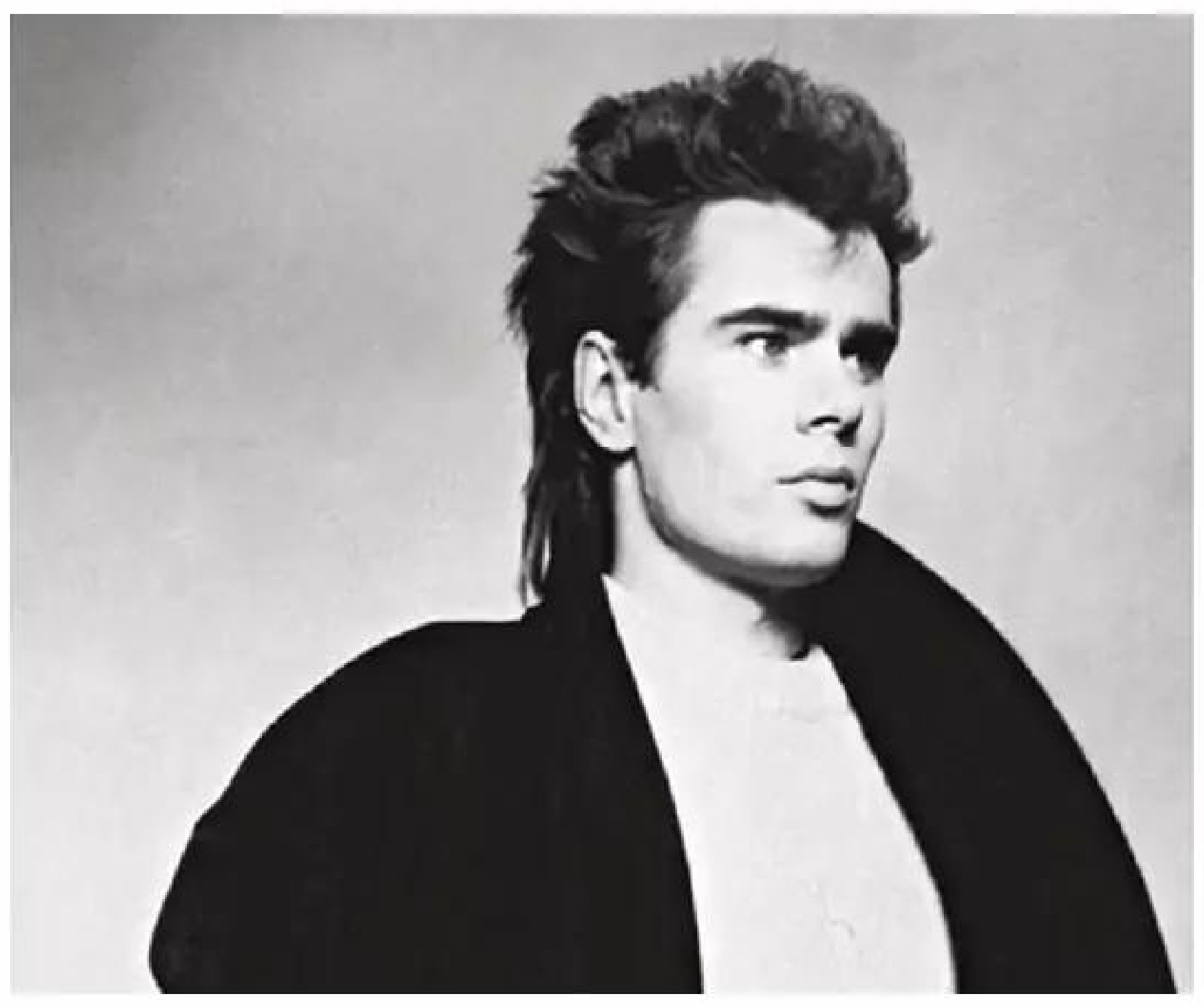
IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF Blitzed

ON SALE 5TH SEPTEMBER

INTERVIEWS WITH PAUL STATHAM OF B-MOVIE AND THE DARK FLOWERS, THE BLUEBELLS, BIRMINGHAM ELECTRIC, AND PART TWO OF OUR MIDGE URE INTERVIEW.

ANNABELLA LWIN FILLS US IN ABOUT THE REAL BOW WOW WOW

NIK KERSHAW TALKS ABOUT HIS FORTHCOMING BOOK AND TOUR



WE HAVE A FEATURE LOOKING AT THE BLITZ CLUB EXHIBITION AT THE DESIGN MUSEUM

PLUS ANNIVERSARY REVIEWS INCLUDING **A-HA**, **STING**, **XTC** AND **ROBERT PALMER**.

ALBUM REVIEWS, BOOK REVIEWS AND GIG REVIEWS PLUS WE DELVE INTO THE SOUNDTRACK OF JOHN HUGHES' ICONIC 1985 MOVIE THE BREAKFAST CLUB

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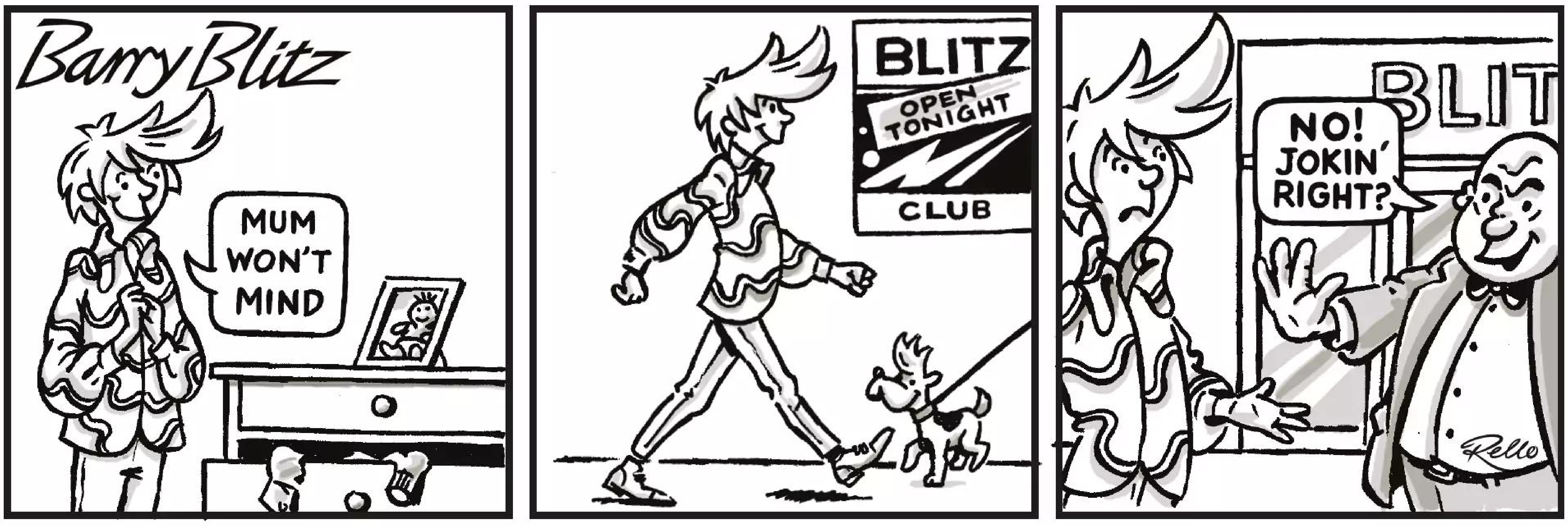
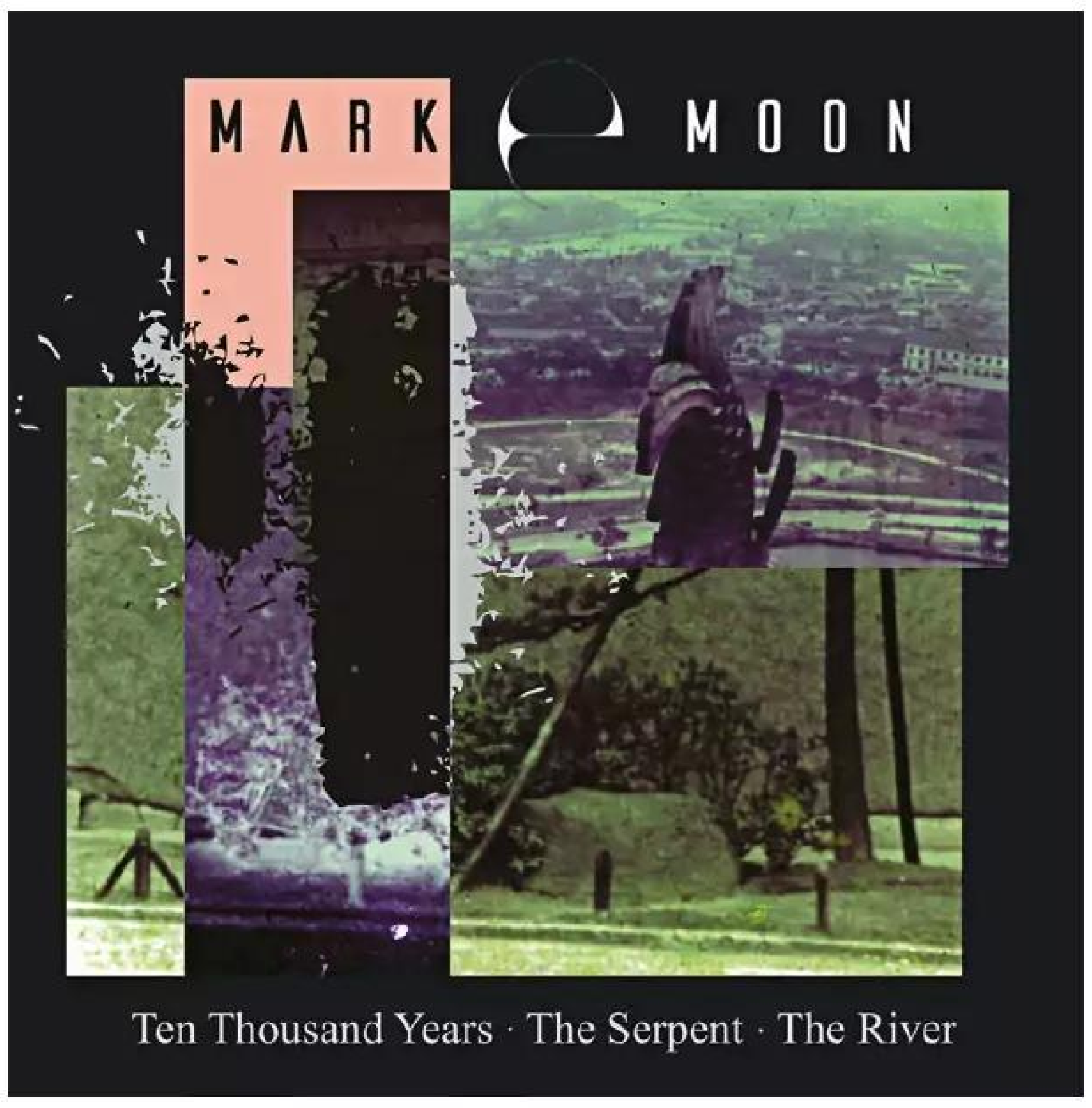


Analogue Moments

By Mark Buckley

There is so much good music coming my way lately; it's hard to keep up with it all. The AnalogueTrash blog and this column let me access such great music; it can sometimes take me a few months to catch up with it all! But I'm so glad that I get to hear them. As ever, thank you to the Blitzed family for letting me share these albums.

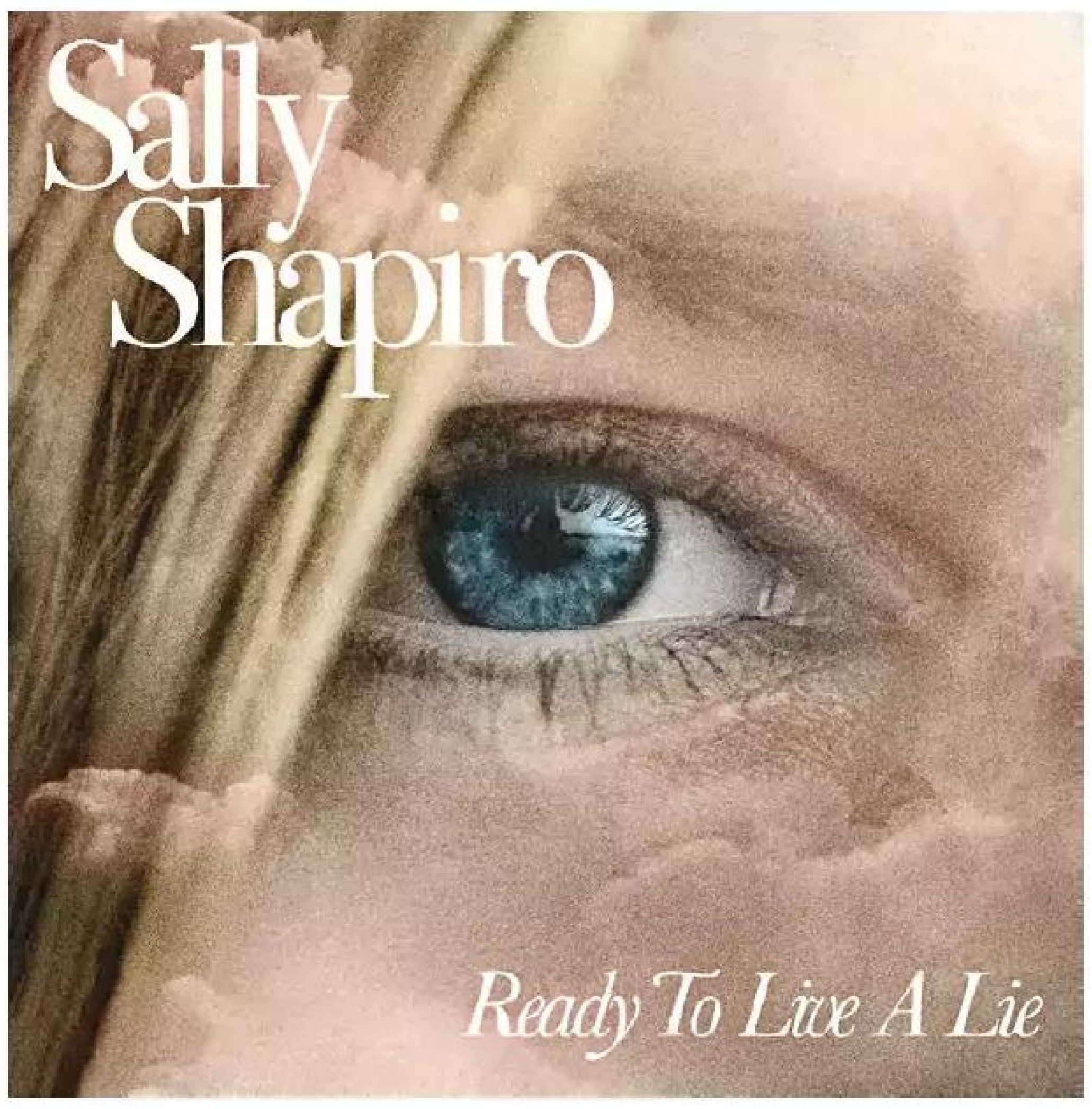
bow church – Unknown Realms
I first came across Berlin-based David Whiting as Demoscene Time Machine and Heretics, who explored 8-bit experimentalism and dark electropop respectively. However, bow church should probably be considered his 'main' project. Starting in London in 2012, the project's first full album since 2018 is a primal mix of doomy synths, hypnotic vocal loops and often-glacial melodies. Determinedly avoiding conventions, Unknown Realms nods towards trip-hop, downtempo and Nils Frahm, but has a haunting, individual ambience that defies easy descriptors. It's an album, rather like the music of Frahm, that deserves to be listened to and focused on for the layers and meanings of each song to be fully appreciated.


MARK e MOON
Ten Thousand Years · The Serpent · The River

Mark E Moon – Ten Thousand Years
Musical gems can sometimes come from the most unexpected places. That applies to Ten Thousand Years, the new three-song EP from Isle of Man-based Mark E Moon. The title track is edgy and raw, like Television, as the wordplay on that band's name might suggest. What's notable is the way the Ten Thousand Years nudges that into something melodic and dramatic, while the lead male vocals of Mark Sayle ramp up the melancholy and romance. The band are set to release a new album, titled Pop Noir, in the coming months, and judging by the atmospheric trifecta of emotionally moving songs on this EP, it's going to be a belter!

SEXTILE
yes, please.

Sextile – yes, please.
Sacred Bones is one of those labels that has a quality roster, and Sextile are a great fit for them. You can tell from the opening song, the aptly-titled 'Intro', that Melissa Scaduto and Brady Keehn have a passion for music as fans as well as creatives. Dirty electro, industrial, and hard electroclash tussle with punky vocals and sexy EBM basslines designed to dance yourself into blissful oblivion. The album doesn't ignore the reality of the increasingly precarious America they call home but notes this via a stream of high-energy calls to action that are impossible to ignore.


Sally Shapiro
Ready To Live A Lie

Sally Shapiro – Ready To Live A Lie
Sally Shapiro isn't a person but a duo: composer/producer Johan Agebjörn and an unnamed female vocalist who doesn't appear live with the band. That's a shame, because seeing Ready To Live A Lie being performed live would be an amazing experience. Italo is a recurrent theme in the album, but always within the purview of the Sally Shapiro sound: lush house piano, synthpop riffs, and Scandipop hooks land each track somewhere between Pet Shop Boys (the cover of 'Rent' is divinely sad), Client, and Saint Etienne. Yes, it's that good!

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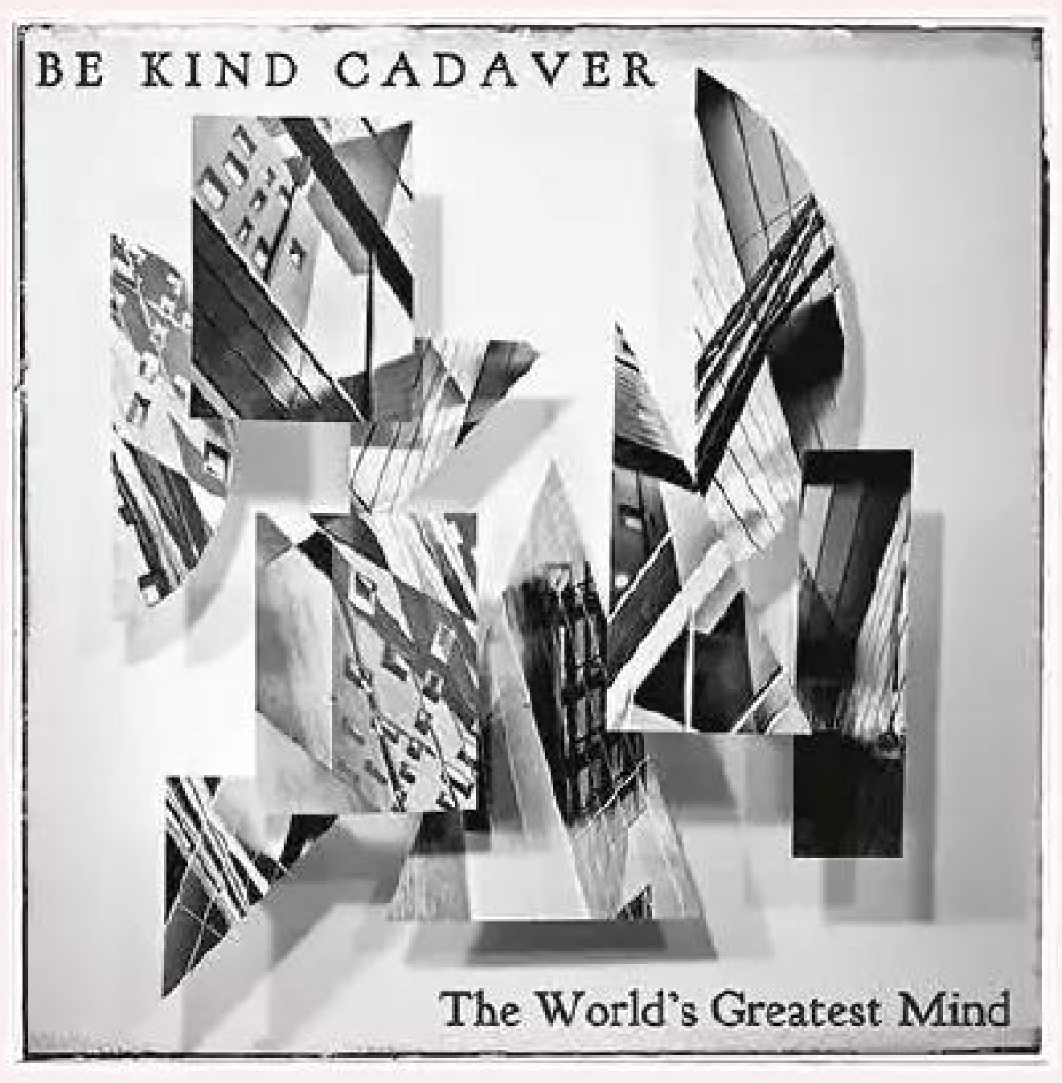

BE KIND CADAVER
The World's Greatest Mind

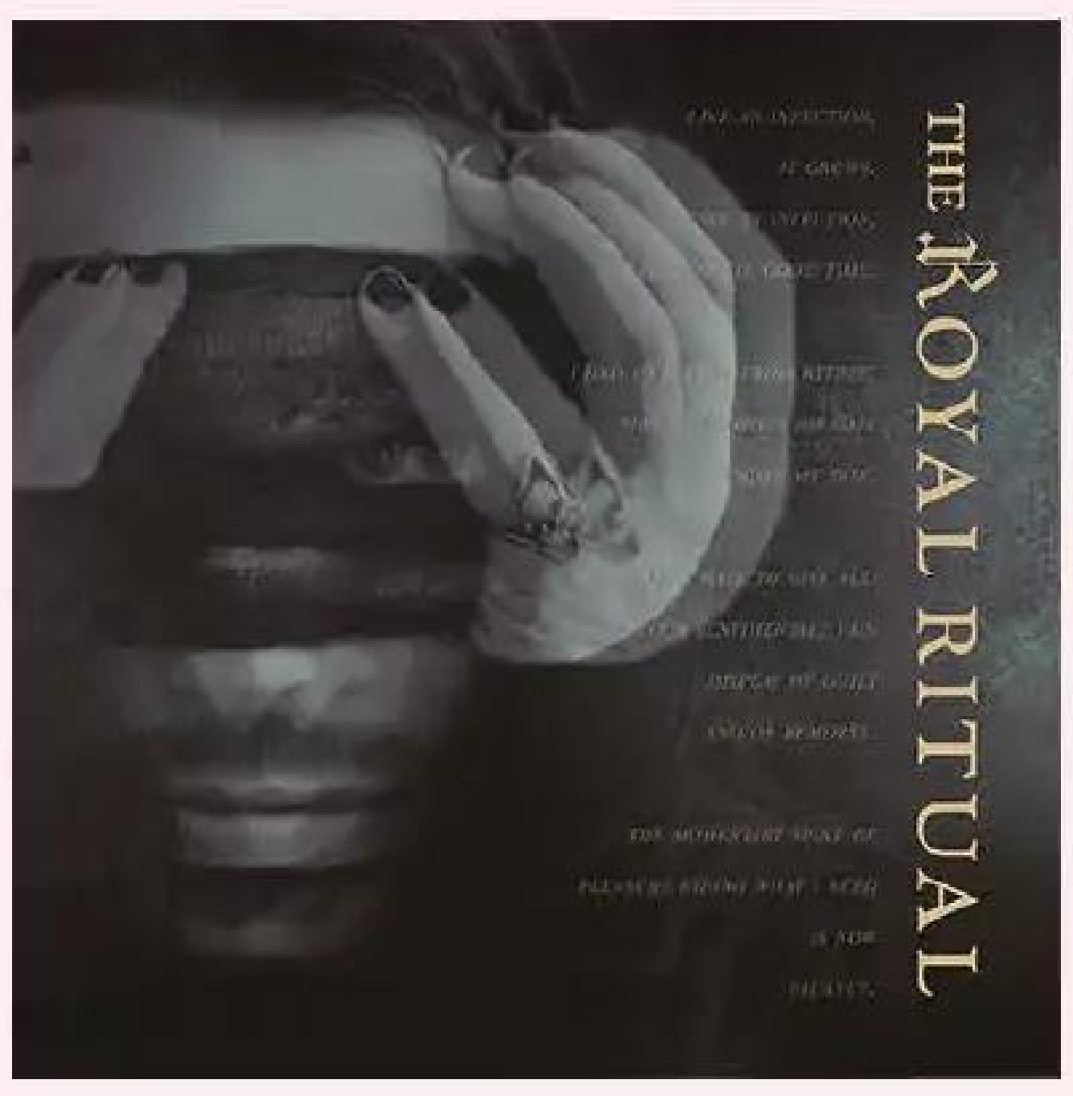
BE KIND CADAVER
THE WORLD'S GREATEST MIND

DEATHBOY
I FORGET BETTER

DEATHBOY
I FORGET BETTER

The Frixion
BACK WHERE WE STARTED

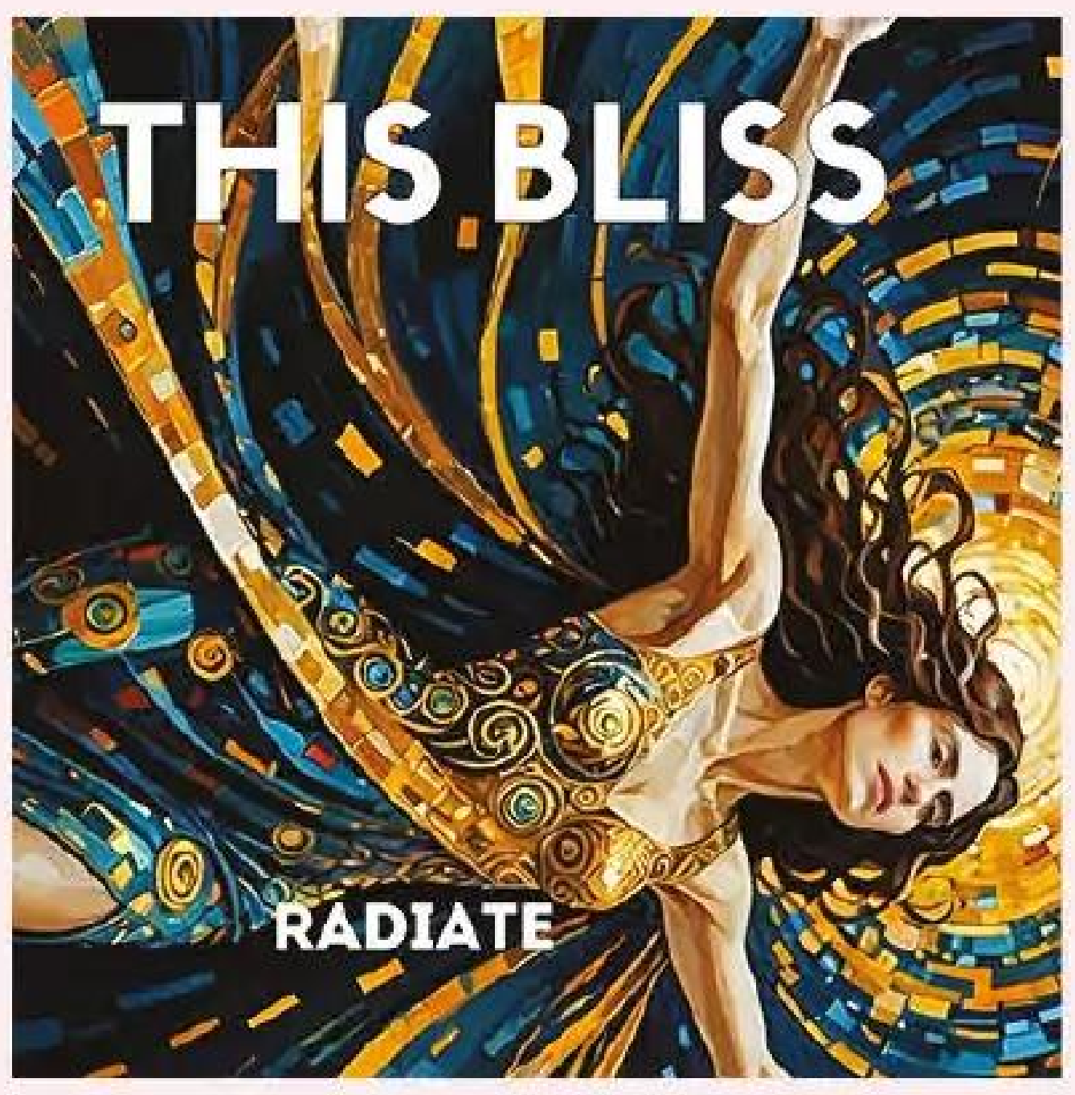
THE FRIXION
BACK WHERE WE STARTED


THE ROYAL RITUAL

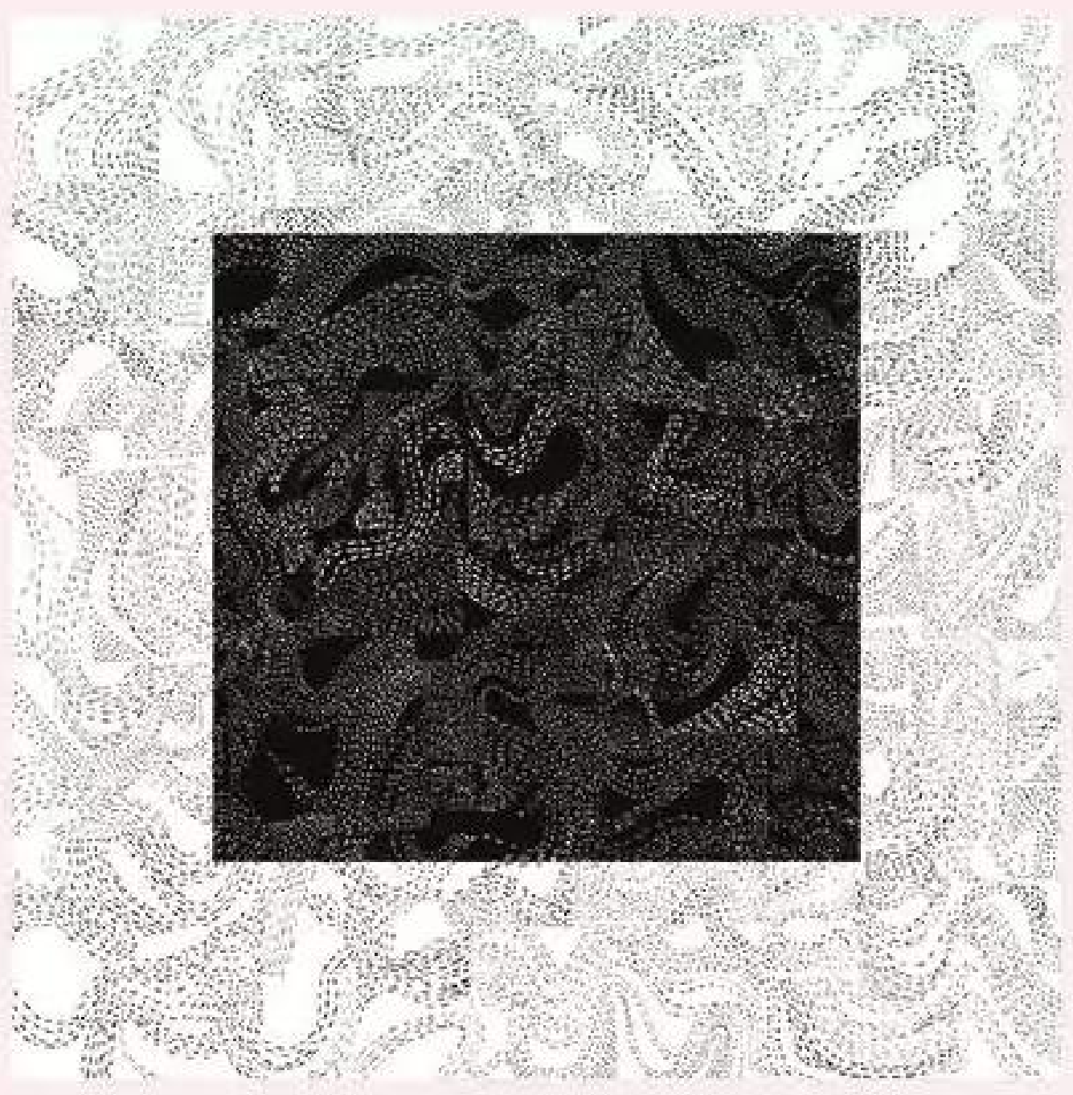
THE ROYAL RITUAL
PLEASURE HIDES YOUR NEEDS EP

BIRDMAN CULT

BIRDMAN CULT
BIRDMAN CULT


THIS BLISS
RADIATE

THIS BLISS
RADIATE



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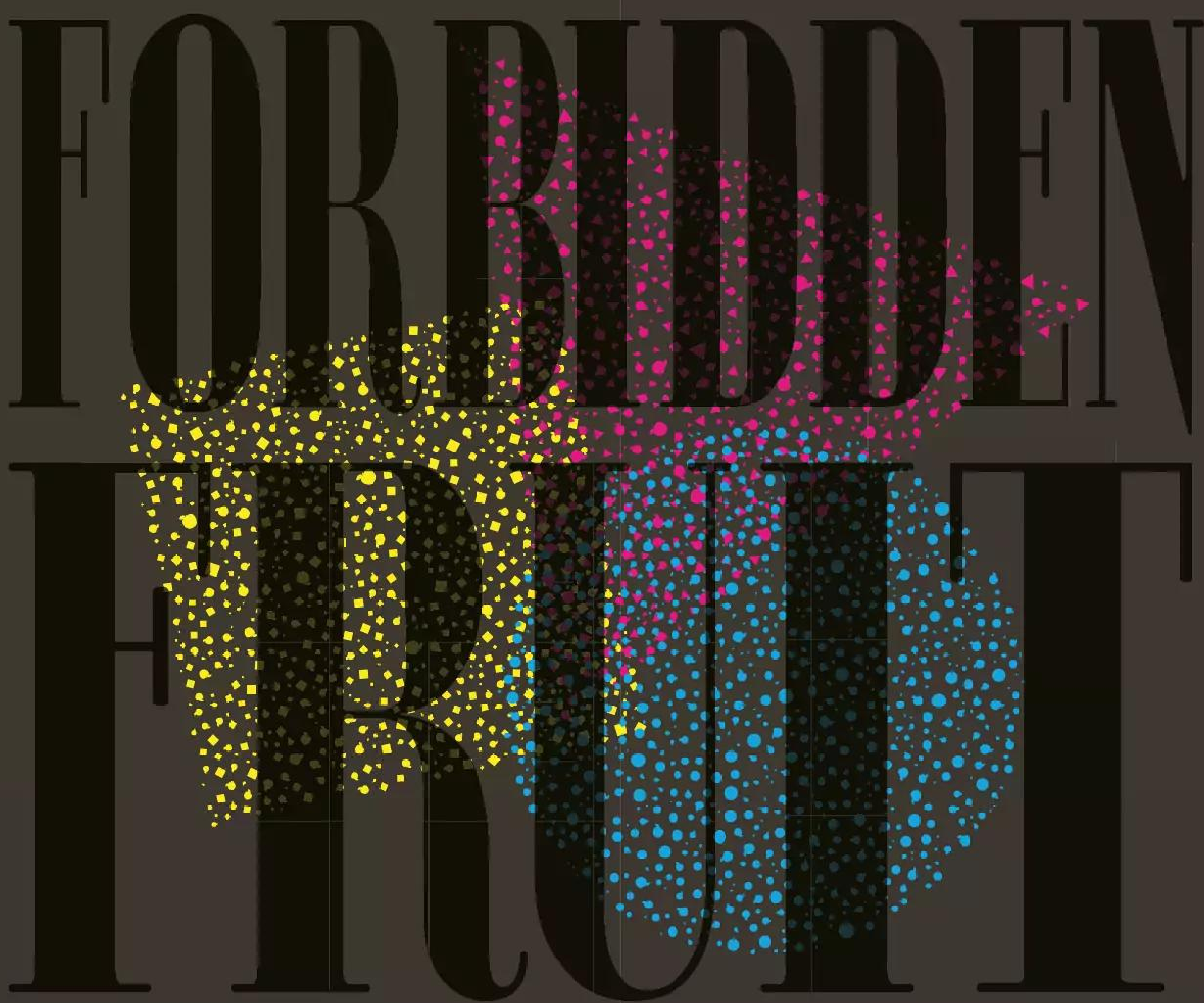

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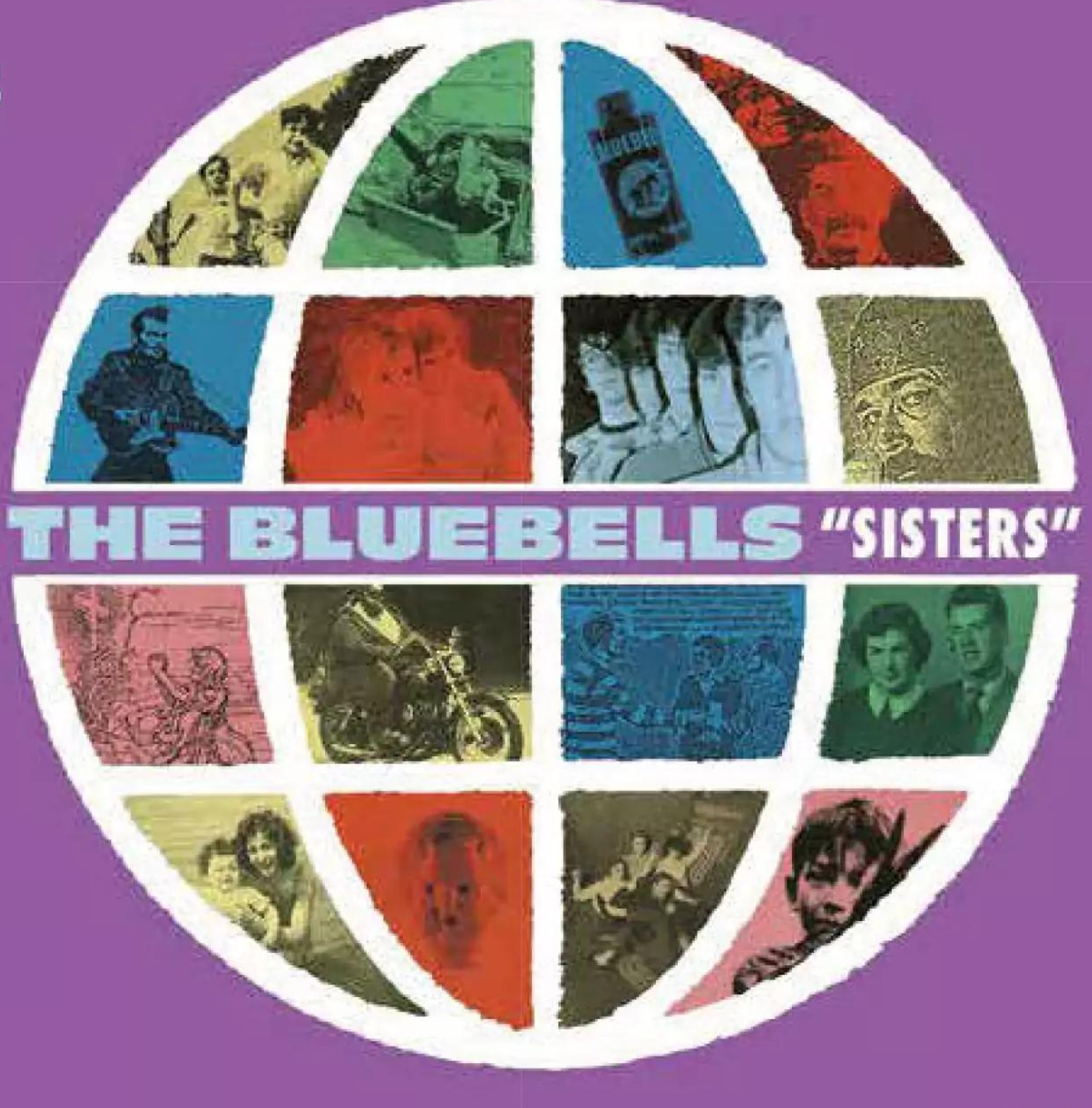

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